



# I Can Learn Social Skills!



Poems About Getting Along,  
Being a Good Friend, and Growing Up



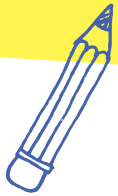
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PUBLISHING®

Benjamin Farrey-Latz

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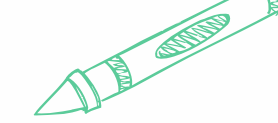
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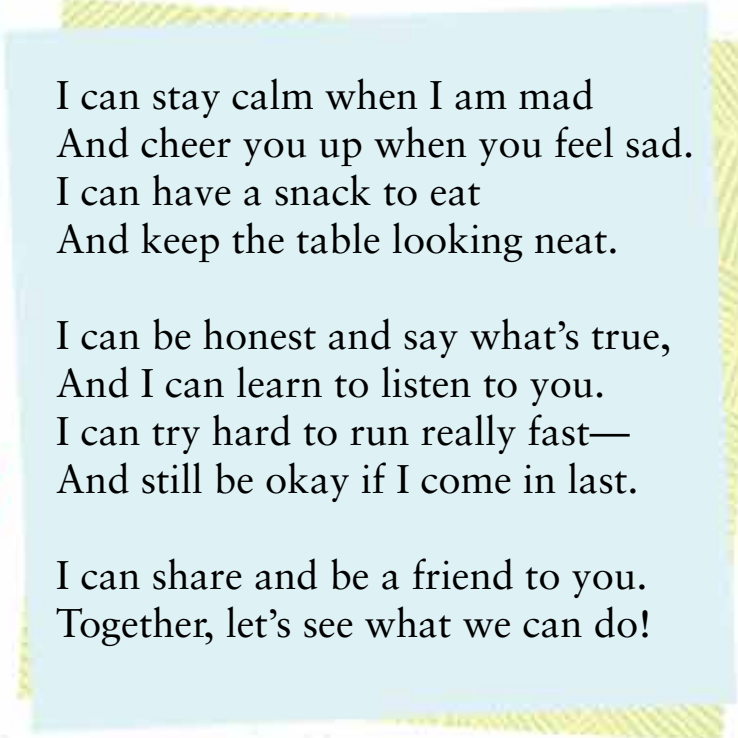
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I Can  
Do That!



I can stay calm when I am mad  
And cheer you up when you feel sad.  
I can have a snack to eat  
And keep the table looking neat.

I can be honest and say what's true,  
And I can learn to listen to you.  
I can try hard to run really fast—  
And still be okay if I come in last.

I can share and be a friend to you.  
Together, let's see what we can do!





# I Can Greet You!



Hi Hiya

How are you? Doin' good—how 'bout you?

Feeling great, glad to say. Thanks for brightening my day!

Wow! I said hello and so did you. I smiled at you and you smiled too.



# Building Social Skills with Poems: Tips for Teachers, Parents, and Caregivers



Learning social skills can be challenging for students of all ages. As adults, we often can forget that things like understanding emotions, handling strong feelings, using manners, and displaying appropriate behavior in different situations can be subtle and not always obvious to children. These skills are important not only to help students get along with one another and adults, but also to help them succeed—at school, at home, and everywhere else.

Poetry can be a fun and memorable way for younger kids to explore these important lessons. And rhyming has been shown to aid in retention of information. You can share *I Can Learn Social Skills!* with students as part of a larger social skills lesson or on its own.

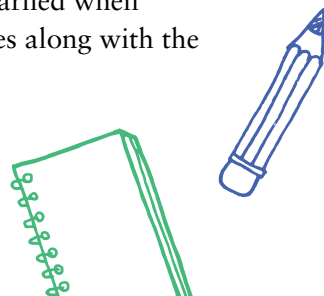


## How to Use the Poems

You may want to read several poems with your group as a way to introduce social skills in general. This could prompt discussions about areas in which students need to improve their skills. More often, you will probably read individual poems that apply to specific situations or skills. For example, if you have students who experience anxiety or who don't like change, you could read "Anxious," "Change Is So Hard," and "Look 'em in the Eye" or "Make the Switch." The poems are grouped into categories to make it easier to find the skills you want to teach, but many poems can apply to multiple situations or skills.

Read the poems aloud and ask children to recite them back. Assign students to memorize poems, or do role plays in which children (and adults) act out scenes from the poems. Most important of all, talk about the poems. Ask students what the message is. Ask if they have ever struggled with similar issues. How have they solved these struggles in the past? What other solutions can they think of?

Of course, the social skills messages embedded in these poems are best learned when students also practice the skills the poems discuss. Try the following activities along with the poems to give children opportunities to apply what they've learned.



## "I Can Do That!"

This poem introduces the topic of social skills, with an emphasis on the ideas that social skills are about the things we do together and that all of us can learn and strengthen these skills. Playing off the poem's title, brainstorm with students to come up with a list of things they can already do, as well as things they would like to be able to do. This list can be set up as a T-chart on paper or on a chalkboard or whiteboard. Help guide the discussion at first by suggesting simple tasks (at school or outside of school) students may or may not be able to do. Then move on to social skills, suggesting ideas such as "I can be a good friend," "I can listen to other people," or "I can calm myself down when I am mad." If it's appropriate and safe for your group and environment, children can show some of the things they can do. Talk about how doing these things might affect others.



## Poems About Talking with Others

The first three poems in this section can be helpful to students who tend to be on the quieter side or who need to learn to self-advocate.

## "I Can Greet You"

Use this poem as a jumping-off point for brainstorming different types of greetings. List verbal greetings, such as "Hello," "Hi," "How are you?" and "How's it going?" Then have students think of nonverbal greetings, such as a nod, smile, wave, or fist bump. Take it a step further by role-playing situations where people meet and greet each other.

## "Help, Please"

This poem reminds students that adults may not realize students need help if children don't ask for it. After reading, ask students to talk about a time they needed help and did or did not ask for it. If they didn't ask for help, why not? If they did, what happened? Role-play asking for help in different situations, such as:

- A teacher is explaining how to complete a math problem and you don't understand the information.
- A parent or teacher gives you directions on how to clean up, but you don't understand the directions.
- You are being teased on the playground and aren't sure what to do.

