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## Friendship etiquette

*Corinne Gregory, president of The PoliteChild\* and mom of three, offers these suggestions.*

**Be mindful of social signals.** "Take note of their body language, their tone of voice, how distracted they are — some moms are trying to grab some much-needed down time while their kids are playing, so they may not feel chatty. Or, if they are very involved in playing with or supervising their child [ren], they may not be able to focus on adult conversation. This may not be the best time, and it may have nothing to do with you or whether they want to be friendly."

**Listen twice as much as you talk.** "Use the art of engaging conversation: Ask questions about *her* — her kids, her interests. Don't launch off into a monologue about *you*. For some moms, this may be the first adult conversation they've had in days and it's tempting to just start sharing your life history."

**Respect boundaries.** "Because you're looking for someone to bond with, you may be tempted to compare notes on childbirth, C-section scars, your child's latest bout of projectile vomiting — keep that to yourself. Keep initial conversations pleasant and upbeat and refrain from questionable topics or opinions. Off-limits topics are the usual: money, politics, religion [except if you have a connection in common], sex."

**Show interest, but don't stalk.** "If it looks like you both are clicking, exchange contact information before you leave — don't just hope that you'll run into each other again. Give it a day or two before you follow up. Invite your new mom buddy to coffee or meet at a child-friendly bookstore."

\*Woodinville-based *The PoliteChild* ([www.politechild.com](http://www.politechild.com))

*offers community etiquette courses and social-skill*

*curriculum for schools.*

### Other moms share tips

**Research early.** Scope out tot programs and support groups while you're pregnant. That makes it easier to get out later when you're stir crazy but sleep-deprived and working around baby naps.

**Be patient.** Don't get discouraged if you don't hit it off with someone on your first group outing. Different activities will attract different folks so the

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next one might go better.

**Find a good match.** Some moms want a structured support group, such as PEPS, while others prefer looser come-if-you-want social clubs like Mothers & More. If your goal is chatting, then some baby-and-me classes might be too much organized activity and not enough casual talk time.

**Look for new moms or transplants.** Find a fellow new mom (or recently moved mom); it's less likely she'll have a built-in social network.

**Befriend a solo mom.** It's human nature to be attracted to groups of friends who look like they're having so much fun. But glance around the corners and find another mom new to the club or class who is more likely to have the time and inclination to make friends.

**Consider technology.** Some moms find it less threatening to share via Internet message boards or set up play dates by e-mail.

**Volunteer.** Working on a committee or board of a mom's club or cooperative preschool (many start with babies as young as 1) is a way to bond *and* support the community. Many moms feel like they get as much out of a program as they give. If they just show up casually, they don't have the same investment with the group or its members.

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