



BUMPS TO BIGS
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KID Connection

These resources bridge age gaps from toddlers through teenagers, offering structured ways for kids to socialize through shared play, hobbies, and mentorship.

Toddlers & Preschoolers (Ages 2–5)

At this stage, socialization is about cooperative play and "side-by-side" learning.

- **YMCA Early Care & Preschool Programs:** Focuses on inclusive social-emotional development and kindergarten readiness.
 - Tip: Look for "Impact Membership" options for early access to toddler classes and playgroups.
 - Website: [ymca.org](https://www.ymca.org)
- **Head Start:** A national non-profit that connects children from all backgrounds, promoting social development and healthy community bonds.
 - Tip: Use the local grantee locator on their site to find a center that offers family social events.
 - Website: [nhsa.org](https://www.nhsa.org)
- **Sesame Street:** While primarily media-based, their digital platform offers interactive games and coloring activities that parents can use to facilitate parallel play.
- Website: [sesamestreet.org](https://www.sesamestreet.org)

Elementary School (Ages 6–12)

Socializing at this age often revolves around structured clubs and shared creative projects.

- **Big Brothers Big Sisters of America:** Creates monitored "matches" that foster confidence and connection through community-based outings.
 - Tip: Inquire about their "School-Based" mentoring, where kids build social bonds with mentors right at their campus.
 - Website: [bbbs.org](https://www.bbbs.org)
- **Let Grow Play Clubs:** A program specifically designed to help schools and neighborhoods set up "independent play" clubs where kids socialize without heavy adult interference.
 - Tip: Download their "Independence Kit" to start a small play-based social group in your own neighborhood.
 - Website: [letgrow.org](https://www.letgrow.org)



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- **ChessKid:** A safe, nationwide digital platform where kids can learn and play chess against peers in a secure environment.
- Website: chesskid.com

Middle & High School (Ages 13–18)

Teens often seek social connection through advocacy, specialized interests, and leadership roles.

- **Youth MOVE National:** A youth-led organization that unites diverse voices to advocate for mental health and juvenile justice.
 - Tip: Encourage teens with "lived experience" to join their collective to build social bonds through shared activism.
 - Website: youthmovenational.org
- **Communities In Schools (CIS):** Connects students across 29 states with site coordinators who provide tutoring, mental health support, and peer social networks.
 - Tip: Check their "Stay Connected" page to find local volunteer or peer-leadership opportunities.
 - Website: communitiesinschools.org
- **Scratch:** Created by the MIT Media Lab, this site allows teens to collaborate on coding stories, games, and animations, fostering a global community of young creators.
 - Website: scratch.mit.edu
- **Boys & Girls Clubs of America:** A nationwide "home base" for after-school socializing, offering everything from sports to digital arts.
 - Tip: Enroll your teen in the "Torch Club"—a small-group leadership club specifically for middle schoolers that focuses on service and teamwork.
 - Website: bgca.org
- **CoderDojo:** Free, volunteer-led coding clubs for kids where they can hang out and build games together in a social setting.
 - Tip: This is great for "introverted" socializers who prefer to bond over a shared project rather than face-to-face small talk.
 - Website: coderdojo.com



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- **Civil Air Patrol (CAP) Cadet Program:** A non-profit auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force that brings kids together for aerospace education, physical fitness, and leadership.
 - Tip: If your middle schooler likes structure, uniforms, and the idea of flight, this provides a very tight-knit peer group.
 - Website: gocivilairpatrol.com
- **National Junior Honor Society (NJHS):** A school-based organization that connects high-achieving students through community service projects.
 - Tip: Encourage your child to run for a chapter office; it's an excellent way to turn academic success into social leadership.
 - Website: njhs.us
- **Girls Who Code:** Free clubs (grades 3–12) designed to close the gender gap in tech while building a sisterhood of supportive peers.
 - Tip: These clubs prioritize "bravery over perfection," which is a great social mindset for girls in middle school.
 - Website: girlswhocode.com
- **ROOTS & SHOOTS (by the Jane Goodall Institute):** A global youth-led program where kids socialize by starting local projects to help people, animals, and the environment.
 - Tip: This is the perfect outlet for "earth-conscious" teens to meet like-minded friends through community action.
 - Website: rootsandshoots.org

Note: Every child socializes differently. Whether they want to lead a meeting or build a robot in silence next to a peer, these organizations provide the space to do it safely.