

INTERMEDIATE

How to make friends?



By Tom Viren

If you've discovered that the person you're talking to has a common interest, ask him or her more about it and, if appropriate, whether they get together with others (in a club, for example) to pursue this interest. If so, this is a perfect opportunity to ask about joining them. If you clearly express interest (when? where? can anyone come?) they'll probably invite you. If you have a club, band, church, etc. that you think they might enjoy, take the opportunity to give them your number or email address and invite them to join you.

Be a good friend. Once you've started spending time with potential friends, remember to do your part (i.e. initiating some of the activities, remembering birthdays, asking how the other person is feeling) or else the friendship will become unbalanced and an uneasiness or distance is likely to arise.

Be reliable. If you and your friend agree to meet somewhere, don't be late, and do not stand them up. If you're not going to make it on time or make it at all, call them as soon as you realize it. Apologize and ask to reschedule. Don't make them wait for you unexpectedly; it's rude, and it is certainly not a good way to launch a potential friendship. When you say you'll do something, do it. Be someone that people know that they can count on.

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Be a good listener. Many people think that in order to be seen as "friend material" they have to appear very interesting. Far more important than this, however, is the ability to show that you're interested in others. Listen carefully to what people say, remember important details about them (their names, their likes and dislikes), ask questions about their interests, and just take the time to learn more about them. You don't want to be the guy or girl that always has a better story than anyone else or that changes the subject abruptly instead of continuing the flow of conversation. These people appear too wrapped up in themselves to be good friends--"one-ups-man-ship" is a put down.

Be trustworthy. One of the best things about having a friend is that you have someone to whom you can talk about anything, even secrets that you hide from the rest of the world. The key to being a good confidante is the ability to keep secrets, so it's no secret that you shouldn't tell other people things that were told to you in confidence. Before people even feel comfortable opening up to you, however, you need to build trust. Be honest about yourself and your beliefs, and don't gossip about others or spread rumours or they will think you like stories better than friends.

Be there for the person. You've probably heard of fair-weather friends. They're the ones who are happy to be around you when things are going well, but are nowhere to be found when you really need them. Part of being a friend is being prepared to make sacrifices of your time and energy in order to help out your friends. If a friend needs help with an unpleasant chore, or if he or she just needs a shoulder to cry on, be there.

Choose your friends wisely. As you befriend more people, you may find that some are easier to get along with than others. While you always give people the benefit of the doubt, sometimes you realize that certain friendships are unhealthy, such as if a person is obsessively needy or controlling towards you, constantly critical, or introducing dangers or threats into your life. If this is the case, ease your way out of the friendship as gracefully as possible. Preoccupy yourself with other things, such as a new volunteer opportunity, so that you can honestly say that you don't have enough time in your schedule to spend time with them (but don't substitute their time for time with other friends; they may notice and become jealous, and more drama will ensue). Cherish those friends you make who are a positive influence in your life, and do your best to be a positive influence in theirs.