



# Friendship guide for young people

Young person's guide

**The  
Children's  
Society**

# Advice, ideas and tips from young people

**The Children's Society has been researching young people's well-being for more than 15 years and we have surveyed over 39,000 young people about how they feel about their lives. By hearing directly from young people like you, we can actually know what's going on, and work out how best to support young people who might be struggling.**

Every year we publish what we learn from young people in our Good Childhood Report, which you can find at **childrenssociety.org.uk**

Over a number of years, we have learnt that friends can have a big impact on young people's well-being.

To understand this better, during spring 2020 we asked young people aged 8-19 from across the country, in schools and in youth clubs, about friendship.

We asked them what advice they would give to other young people, which is shared in this advice guide. There are two sections: **friendship advice** and ideas on **how to look after yourself**.

We also asked young people what adults should know about how to support young people with their friendships. This advice from young people has been put into a separate guide for adults to read – you can find this on our website too.





## Reflection activity

Before you continue, you might like to fill in this space with your own thoughts, ideas, drawings etc about what you think is important in a good friend.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick teal border, designed for a reflection activity. The interior of the box is white and completely blank.

# What *young* *people* told us.

From what young people told us it is clear that friendships are complicated and unique. There is no magic formula to make sure that friendships work well.

Some young people were very honest and said they didn't know what to say to be helpful.

Some young people said that if they are finding a friendship difficult they ask an adult for help.

*'I still don't think that I've managed to figure out what makes some friendships really good and what makes some really bad...it's like on a case by case basis. You just have to figure it out as you go along, I don't think there is a magical formula, it's just how your brains click.'*

*'I don't know, I can't keep them myself.'*

*'You can also ask a parent/ carer for help because they are more mature and can handle things properly.'*

Lots of young people came up with some very helpful advice about **friendships** and also how to **look after yourself** when figuring out friendships.



# Friendship advice

## 1. Communication is important

- Friends might not always agree or have the same opinion and that's OK.
- Talk and listen to each other.
- Saying sorry helps.
- Talk things through if there's a fall out.
- Be fair and deal with things calmly.
- Try to deal with issues at the time.

*'Be nice to one another and if you both disagree on something, it's not the end of the world!'*

*'Resolve issues quickly. Make amends before things go too far. Keep in touch via phone or playing online. Don't fall out over little things.'*

*'Don't keep things from each other that could end up hurting someone. If you have an argument, apologise, even if you think it's the other person's fault - you probably had something to do with it too.'*

*'Listening to each other is the key. Spend more time together. Talk to each other.'*

## 2. How to treat your friends

- Don't put friends down.
- Don't go behind friends backs.
- Stand up for them.
- Be there for them.
- Give time to them.
- Accept and respect each other.
- Give each other space.
- Compromise when you can.

*'Keep in contact.  
**Be nice.**  
Have each other's back.  
**And be there  
for them.'***

*'Always be kind to people, that's how you make friends. Never make fun or try to put them down, especially in front of other people. Look out for signs that your friend may be in trouble or your friend may need your help.'*

*'Listen to each other's opinions and come up with a compromise as much as possible. They could also accept that they may have different friends or interests and opinions. They should always trust each other and not tell people their friends feelings and secrets and give each other space after an argument.'*

*'Treat others  
how you  
would like  
to be treated.'*

*'Always be truthful. Treat them all the same. Always be a good example and never try and pretend you are the leader. Every friend is as important as each other.'*

### 3. Being a good friend

A good friend is made up of a mix of good qualities, like:

- Trust.
- Honesty.
- Being kind and caring.
- Understanding.
- Loyalty.
- Having fun.
- A sense of humour.
- Being yourself.

*'I think all the good friendships I have, I try to sustain by balancing out caring for them and them caring for me...so I think it's a little bit about give and take.'*

*'Honesty is key.'*

*'Don't be fake.  
Be honest. Don't lie.  
Always help each other. Always make an effort.'*

*'Important to be yourself.'*

*'Only be friend with people you can trust.'*

*'Be kind.'*

# Look after yourself!

As you can see, from the friendship advice young people have given:

- Figuring out friendships can be complicated and sometimes pretty difficult.
- Things can and often do go wrong along the way.
- There's a lot to learn when it comes to friendships.

Some young people also advise that it's important to look after yourself when it comes to your friends.

Next are some ideas from young people on how to do that.





# Look after yourself

## 1. You have choice about friendships

- It's OK not to be friends with everyone.
- Be aware of how you feel about your friendships.
- You can choose to end a friendship if you want to.
- Making friends outside of school increases your choice.

*'I would only be a friend with someone you actually like not someone who is the most popular because then both people will like each other.'*

*'If you don't like them, leave them.'*

*'It took me a long time to realise that you can dislike someone and still be around them. Sometimes you meet someone, and you don't like them and that's fine. I didn't realise as a kid that I was allowed to not like people and just move on from that.'*

*'Be friends with someone who you care about and who cares about you. Make sure you choose the right friends because they can affect a lot of your life.'*

## 2. Friendships are about respecting each other

- Friendships should be equal.
- Friendships need time and effort on both sides.
- Friendships need respect and understanding on both sides.
- Don't change who you are to fit in or be accepted.

*'Respect each other and that if you feel like you have to constantly make a friendship last, it's not the one for you.'*

*'You need to remember that you have to put time and effort into your friendship, but remember if they start saying negative things to you, or anyone else, to try to distance yourself or help them see what they are doing is wrong.'*

*'Teach kids what manipulative and horrible behaviour is because all you're taught as a kid is if you hit somebody and you say a bad word to somebody that's bad and that's going to hurt them. But they aren't taught about the really subtle things that are also really bad.'*

*'True friendship matters. Anyone toxic? Don't be friends with them, keep your friends limited to people who seem nice.'*

### Toxic friendships!

Be aware of friendships that are damaging for you.

### 3. Friendships change and sometimes end

- Not all friendships last. They can change and sometimes end, that's normal.
- It's OK to end friendships without feeling guilty about it, even though it's not always easy to do.

*'Not all friendships will last so just live life for yourself. Don't worry about anyone else.'*

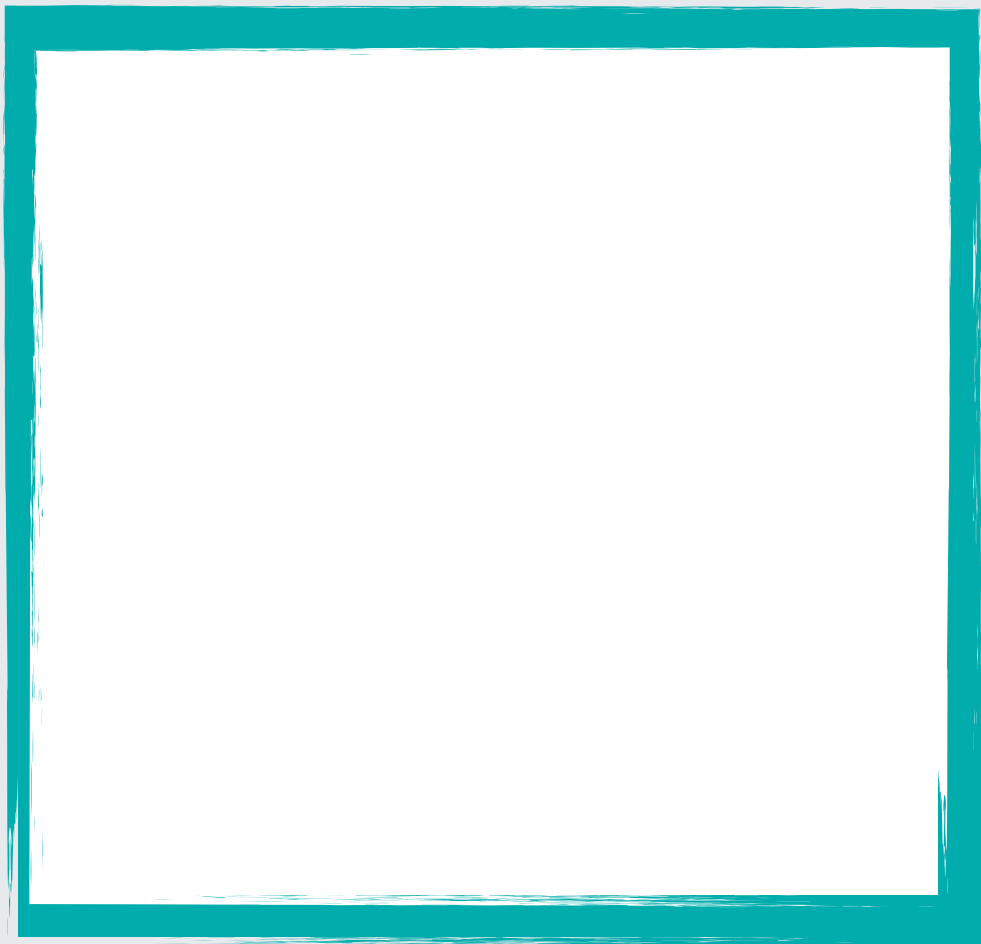
*'You don't have to always communicate with someone to stay friends. Sometimes they come and go but you are still close with them.'*

*'You can just cut someone off and that doesn't make you bad. Because people think if I cut someone off, I'm causing drama, I'm being the dramatic one. I'm like no, you are freeing yourself from so much future issues, future drama by just ending relationships as soon as it gets toxic. Ask yourself if I was dating this person, would I let them treat me like this? And if the answer is no, don't stay friends with that person either.'*

*Don't be too worried if the very first people that you're mates with in Year 7 aren't in Year 11. Also, even if you have a fight/argument. If someone apologises after an argument, they definitely want to be your mate.'*

# Reflection activity

After reading the guide, you might like to use this space for your own thoughts about the three most important pieces of advice that stand out for you?



# Who can help?

Struggling with friendships is not uncommon. However, if you are worried it is important to ask for help.

This help could be from an adult you trust. You could look through this report together or share your reflections activity pages with them?

Remember, we also asked young people what adults should know about how to support young people with their friendships. This advice from young people has been put into a separate guide for adults to read – you can find it on our website too and share it with adults in your life.

You can also contact Childline for free by calling **0800 1111** or by visiting their website [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)



**Every young person should have  
the support they need in order  
to enjoy a safe, happy childhood.**

**That's why we run services and  
campaigns that make children's lives  
better and change the systems that  
are placing them in danger.**

**The Children's Society is bringing  
hope back to children's lives.**

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