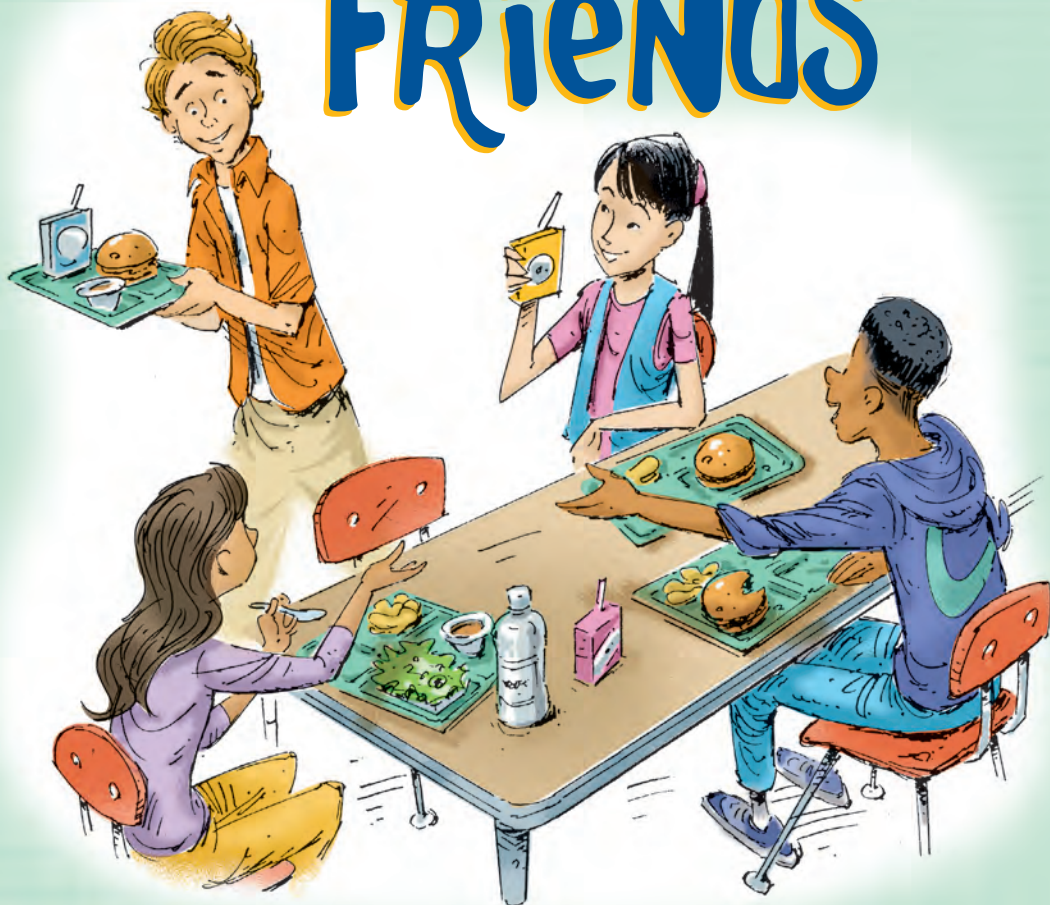


THE **SURVIVAL GUIDE** FOR

Making and Being Friends



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Chapter 1

What's The Big Deal ABOUT FRIENDS?



Devon, age 10, goes outside for recess at school. He brings his game cards and plays with them alone. He thinks the kids at his school are all bullies. He thinks, "I'm fine. I don't need friends." He figures it won't work out anyway, so why even try? But after a while, he looks over and sees the other kids playing tag and laughing and joking. He tries to tell himself he doesn't care, but inside, he does. It's hard to play alone all the time.



What would you do?

Devon seems pretty unhappy. What would you do if you were in his shoes? You'll find some ideas in this chapter, and at the end of the chapter you'll have a chance to revisit Devon's story and make up an ending for it.

Human beings are “social creatures.” That means we have a built-in need to be social—to get to know each other and build relationships. Since the first humans walked the earth, we have lived in communities. We take care of each other. We keep each other company. We love each other.

From the moment we're born, it's in our nature to be happier when we're together, at least some of the time. We get some of that companionship from our families. But we also make important connections with others—our friends.

What Is a Friend?

We all have different things we look for in a friend. Here are a few things that many people value. You can probably think of other ideas to add to the list.

A friend is someone you can do things with:

- * play
- * hang out
- * explore
- * tell stories
- * share important news
- * laugh
- * cry
- * learn new things together

A friend is also someone you can:

- * learn new things *from*
- * count on when you have a problem
- * support when she has a problem

Friends are not only fun, helpful, and reliable. They're also good for you! People who have friends are more likely to:

- * be happier
- * be healthier
- * do better in school
- * live longer
- * be more successful at their jobs when they grow up

Yup—live longer! Hard to believe? Maybe so, but it's true.

What Else Is Good About Friends?

Lots of things.

Friendships help you learn to deal with your feelings. When you have friends, it's normal to disagree, argue, have your feelings hurt, and apologize when you've messed up. Friends also have to learn to share, take turns, work together, and compromise. As you learn how to do these things successfully, you're growing up. You're learning how to get along in the world. Learning to get along now will help you be happier in the future.

When you make friends and manage relationships, you compare yourself to others. You see what others think of you, and you learn a lot about yourself that way. Maybe you don't think you're very smart, but a friend thinks it's cool how you can take things apart and fix them. You may start to see yourself as smart. Or maybe you joke around a lot when you're supposed to be listening or working. Your friends like your sense of humor, but they ask you to be quiet when it's time to focus. You're learning how to act in different situations.

FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD

How do you say “friend” in other languages? Just say the word to someone who speaks a different language, and they’ll know you’re interested in talking to them.

	Say it like
Spanish: <i>amigo</i> (boy) or <i>amiga</i> (girl)	uh-ME-go, uh-ME-guh
French: <i>ami</i>	ah-ME
German: <i>freund</i>	FROYND
Italian: <i>amico</i> (boy) or <i>amica</i> (girl)	ah-ME-co, ah-ME-cuh
Arabic: <i>sadiqi</i> (boy) or <i>sadiqati</i> (girl)	sah-dee-KEY, sah-dee-KA-tee
Russian: <i>drug</i> (boy), <i>podruga</i> (girl)	DROOG, pah-DROO-guh
Chinese: <i>péngyou</i>	pung-YO
Japanese: <i>tomodachi</i>	tow-moh-da-chee
Indian (Hindi): <i>dost</i>	DOST



Learning how to get along with people can help you in other ways. For example, you may do well in your schoolwork, but if you can't get along with your teachers, it will make going to school a lot harder for you. If you lose your cool and yell, forgetting that you are hurting people's feelings, you might even get into serious trouble.

When you grow up, friends are still important. You'll want to have friends who can help you when you need it, give you rides to places, go with you to the movies, celebrate your birthday, shoot baskets with you, or even just talk. And speaking of when you grow up, getting along with others is also important when you have a job.

What Does It Take to Make and Be Friends?

You already know that people are social creatures. It makes sense, then, that making and being friends require “social skills.” These are the different abilities and techniques we all use to get along.

Just like playing an instrument, throwing a ball, or being a good student, social skills are learnable. And just like those other skills, you can't expect to have super social skills overnight. You have to practice. The more you practice, the better you'll get.

Friendship also requires the ability to look closely at yourself. If you have trouble with friendships, ask yourself why. This can be hard. It takes courage, but it's worth it, and you can do it. Be honest with yourself. Maybe you are shy or don't have strong social skills yet. Or maybe you sometimes act in ways that make it harder for others to like you. Some kids might be rude, bossy, or mean. They might not show good sportsmanship, or they might have trouble sharing or taking turns. Some kids are too rough with other kids. Is that ever you?

If you aren't sure what the problem is, ask someone you trust. This might be a parent, teacher, counselor, or friend. Be open to what the person tells you. It might hurt your feelings to hear it, but it's an important first step. How else are you going to get better at making friends? You have to know what to work on.

“It can be good to have a circle of friends, but if it gets too big, you can feel excluded. I think a group of four or five friends is best.” —Girl, age 12

You may also want to think about what kind of friendships you want. Some kids like to have a lot of friends. They are very social and hang out with all kinds of different people. Other

kids prefer to have only a few close friends. Some kids have a best friend, others don't. Some kids hate to be alone, so they spend all their free time with other kids. Some people need "alone time" to recharge, and they hang out with friends less often. All these preferences are fine. Think about what *yours* is.



What would you do?

Remember Devon (page 6), who is afraid to join in with the other kids at school? He tells himself that he doesn't need friends. He tells himself that he's fine without them.

In this chapter, you learned a lot of reasons why friends are important. You learned that friends can help us in many ways, and friendship is an important way of growing up. And you learned that not everyone is naturally good at making friends—but everyone can get better.

So what would you do if you were Devon?

You probably guessed that Devon would be happier if he found the courage to talk to some other kids. Make up some things he could say that would help him do that.



Quick Quiz

Take this short quiz to see how much you learned by reading this chapter. If you like, write your answers on a sheet of paper.

TRUE or FALSE?

- 1 You can learn more about yourself by making friends.
- 2 People who have friends tend to live longer.
- 3 Even kids who have trouble making friends can get better at it.
- 4 Asking others if you act in ways that make it harder to form friendships can be helpful.
- 5 True "social skills" can only be gained by playing the online video game "Social Skillz Crush."

Let's see how you did.

The answer to the first four questions is **True**. The answer to question 5 is "Of course not!"