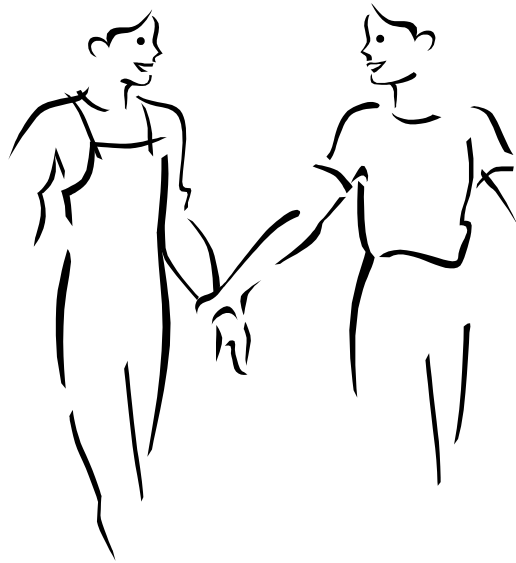


How to Meet People & Build Friendships



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The Sweet Life

Has this ever happened to you? You were at a game or party or dance or fast food joint or in a class with someone you wanted to meet, but just didn't know how. And you never met that person. You kept hoping that they would notice you, but they never did?

Have you ever been on a date and had nothing to say? Have you ever wanted to extend the hand of friendship to someone, but couldn't figure out how to start? Have you ever been in a conversation with someone, and no matter how you tried, it felt like there was simply nothing to say?

This short guide can help you learn how to meet people and build friendships. You can feel confident meeting all sorts of people and enjoying their conversation.

The best thing about this is that it's fun and easy.

Life is simply sweeter when you can share it with someone. All you have to do is have some courage and good sense.

You supply the courage. This guide will supply some of the good sense you need. And the first thing you need to know is what makes a good friendship.

What Doesn't Work

The world will tell you that if you're just beautiful or talented, then you'll have friends.

Pick up any magazine, and a message comes across that if you were just good at soccer, football, or dance, then you'd have friends. If you just own the right car or clothing, if you just have the right makeup or hairstyle, if you just have pecs the size of your mother's frying pan, then you'll have friends and romance. People will flutter to you like moths to a flame.

It's a lie.

That message is dead wrong. It's nice to be beautiful and talented, and there's nothing wrong with that, but what happens next?

Imagine those commercials on TV when a hunk of burning love meets some bombshell of a woman. They look at each other and smile. They posture. Maybe they laugh. Then the commercial ends.

Well, what happens next?

He grins and looks down. She smiles and flips her hair. He grins and looks down. She smiles and flips her hair. He grins and looks down. She smiles and flips her hair. He grins and looks down. She smiles and flips her hair.

How long is that interesting? 10 minutes? Okay, maybe with a few of the Stars it might take longer than 10 minutes to get bored. But eventually, beauty and talent all by themselves get very boring very fast.

You can't build a relationship with beauty or talent. A relationship is about two people. Beauty or talent is about one person; friendship is about two people. You build relationships with materials that people share.

An even bigger lie is that only the beautiful and talented have friends.

That's not true at all. Look around you at those who are popular and enjoy friendships. Some are skinny, some larger. Some are tall, some short. Some are talented at some sport, some are not. Some are superstar beautiful, but most of them are not. Most are regular folks.

Anyone can enjoy friendships, because true friendship requires something quite different from beauty and talent.

Friendship

True friendship flourishes when both people (a) are trustworthy, kind, respectful, and good-humored, and (b) spend time:

1. Doing things together
2. Doing things for each other
3. Talking to each other

Each of these activities is important. If your relationship lacks any one of these things, you limit your friendship.

Imagine someone who serves you and does fun things with you, but never says a word to you. That's a butler, not a friend. It's great to have a butler. But friends are more fun.

How about someone who you do things with, but you never talk to them or do things for each other. That's a classmate or co-worker.

How about someone who talks to you, but never does anything with you or anything for you. That's an acquaintance

It's fine to have butlers, co-workers, and acquaintances; everyone can't be a best buddy, nor should they be. But if you want to take a relationship to a deeper level, you'll need to add in the other activities.

This guide will help you learn how to add in the talking part. You'll learn how to (1) make acquaintances and (2) to enjoy wonderful conversations with those you already know.

The 7 Steps

There are seven steps to enjoying a wonderful conversation.

1. Choose
2. Prepare
3. Ask
4. Introduce
5. Break the ice
6. Converse
7. Exit

These steps are so easy, yet so powerful. You'll be amazed at what a big difference they will make in your life.

Step 1: Choose

The first step is to choose. You must choose to throw out some old ways of thinking. You must reject the notions that good conversation:

- Means good listening which means you sit quietly and let someone else lead the way.
- Means you have to be the life of the party with an unlimited stockpile of hilarious or fascinating stories.
- Will come to those who wait.
- Is a gift that cannot be learned.

Good conversation is a skill that anyone can learn. But it requires first that you choose to have a conversation. Conversations don't come to those who wait and sit on the sidelines. Specifically, you will choose to do two things.

- Be interested in someone else
- Take the responsibility and risk of the conversation

You need to choose to focus on somebody besides your self. People want to be with people who make them feel special, not people who are "special."

God's commandments are basically instructions on how to be happy. And the second commandment is to love other people. **When we lose our lives in other people, we will find happiness.** This is the key to enjoyable friendships and conversations--don't focus on you, focus on the other person.

The role of a good conversationalist is to make the other person feel comfortable. Take the spotlight off of you and put it on someone else. Forget about whether they like you or not. Forget about whether they are cool or geeky.

Cool or geeky, help them shine. There's a common song I've changed to express this. It's a bit silly, but hopefully it will help you remember this important decision.

This little light of thine, I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of thine, I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of thine, I'm going to let it shine.

Let it shine

Let it shine

Let it shine

At the church and school, I'm going to help you shine

At the game or pool, I'm going to help you shine

Everywhere I go, I'm going to help you shine

Help you shine

Help you shine

Help you shine

Once you've decided to be interested in someone else, then you've got to assume the responsibility for helping others feel comfortable. This means you are the first to say hello. You are the one who is prepared with topics to talk about.

Taking the responsibility means you do all you can to keep the conversation going.

When you're interested in another person and take the responsibility for the conversation, they will feel as if they're the only person in the room.

Once you've chosen, you then need to prepare yourself so you can actually be a catalyst for the conversation.

Step 2: Prepare

If you are prepared, you shall not fear. Really. The sweaty palms will disappear.

The Lord told Hyrum Smith to treasure up in his mind the words of the Lord. Once Hyrum had something in his head, the Lord would give him the words to use when it was time to use them. The same principle applies to conversation. If you haven't thought of anything to talk about beforehand, it's likely you won't in the heat of the moment.

Right before you go to an event, spend two minutes identifying:

- 1 ice breaker
- 3 topics you might converse about
- 1 exit line

You'll be amazed at how much easier it is to converse when you perform this 2-minute preparation.

2 minutes! It's that easy.

There's something else you can do to make your preparation a bit easier. In general, you'll want to do two things. First, you want to be able to come up with topics to talk about. So keep up-to-date on current events and issues that affect our lives and broaden your interests. Second, observe what others do in their conversations that work and use it.

Once you're prepared, it's time to begin a conversation. I'll show you what ice breakers and exit lines are in the steps that follow.

Step 3: Ask

Before you try to engage someone in a conversation or meet him or her, you need to find out if they want to be engaged in a conversation. It's polite to ask them.

But how? Going up and saying, "Hiya, may I engage you in a conversation" sounds silly.

It is silly.

And you don't do it that way. Instead you ask using a totally different language. I'm not talking about the languages of luv, French or Italian. I'm talking about body language.

When you want to ask someone if they want to engage you in a conversation, you do so by:

- Making eye contact
- Smiling
- Greeting them

Various things we do with our face and posture say many things to another person. Here are some translations.

Body Language	English
Smile and hold eye-contact	I'm open to talking to you
Smile then immediately look away	I don't have any hard feelings, but I'm not interested in talking
Stop walking, turn, make eye-contact, smile, and wait	I'm happy to see you, I want you to talk or walk with me
Make eye-contact briefly, but don't smile	I see you, but I probably don't want to talk
Stare and hang my mouth open	I'm a geek, walk away 😊

There are many dialects and nuances. A wink might simply mean hello. It might mean something else. But in general when someone holds eye contact with you and smiles, it means they're open to have a conversation.

Here's an example. I look at you and smile. I say, "Hello." Or if you're ahead of me I might say, "Hi, Kim." And if you are willing to engage in a conversation, then you will smile back and maybe move towards me or stop walking.

If the person doesn't want to be engaged, he or she will not make and hold eye contact with you. They will not respond with a smile. They might keep on walking.

If they don't want to converse with you at the moment, don't freak. Maybe they didn't recognize you. Maybe they've got to run to the bathroom. Maybe something awful happened. Maybe they just aren't interested. No problem. Find someone else who is willing to talk.

The best people to engage in a conversation are those not already engaged in conversation. The ones sitting alone or apart. Remember: you're not trying to be the life of the party. You're trying to bring the party to life for someone else.

Once you've asked someone if they want to talk, and they say yes, then you need to introduce yourself.

Step 4: Introduce

What's in a name?

Everything. When you ask for and remember someone's name, it sends a powerful message to him or her. It tells them that you are interested in them.

Of course, you only need to introduce yourself to people you don't know or people you don't know very well. If you know the person, skip the introduction.

The purpose of the introduction is to let the person know who they're talking to, find out the person's name, and perhaps get some free information about them.

So after you've greeted the person. You might say, "I'm John." In non-romantic situations it's appropriate and often helpful to shake their hand.

People will model how you introduce yourself. If you say, "Hi, I'm John", they'll say, "Hi, I'm Mary." If you say, "Hi, I'm John Brown from Westerville", they'll say, "Hi, I'm Mary from Huston."

Introduce your full name so you can get theirs and then try to get a bit of free information. In the example above, now you know that they're from Huston. That gives you a possible topic of conversation. You could say, "Huston, eh? What brings you here?"

Be the first to say "Hello!" Be the first to smile. Introduce yourself and model how you want them to introduce themselves.

If you're in a setting where someone new comes to your group, act as if you're the host and introduce new arrivals to your conversational partner or partners.

Take your time during introductions. Shake each person's hand. Repeat their name. Make an extra effort to remember names, and use them frequently in the conversation—this will help you remember them.

What do you do if you forget their name 10 seconds after they tell you? Do NOT go on. Stop immediately and say, "I'm sorry, I've already forgotten your name. What was it again?" Often, they'll thank you in their hearts because they have forgotten YOUR name, and you've just given them an opportunity to get it again.

Once you've introduced yourself, you need to break the ice. You need to do something to let them shine.

Step 5: Break the Ice

The purpose of the icebreaker is to start the conversation. You break the ice by asking the person a question or by making some statement followed up with a question. Some questions work better in some situations than others. Here are some examples of ice breakers.

- You're at a wedding reception. You might say: how are you connected to the bride or groom?
- You're at school. You might say, how did you get involved with the choir (band, football team, etc.)?
- You're at church. You might say, I don't think I've met you before; what did you think of the meeting?

Some of the more cheesy icebreakers are things like "what's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" and "I'm a tarus, what's your sign?"

The most powerful icebreakers are usually open-ended questions.

Open or Closed?

In a conversation you want to use open-ended questions. If you ask a closed-ended question, that's fine, but follow it up with an open-ended question. If you make a statement about something, that's fine also, but follow it up with an open-ended question. Here are some examples of what happens when you only allow short answers.

The FBI agent

When you only ask closed ended questions, it starts to feel like you're interviewing the person. Here's an example.

Boy: What's your name?

Girl: Lizzy

Boy: Where are you from?

Girl: Westerville

Boy: What school do you go to?

Girl: North

Boy: How many kids in your family?

Girl: 4

Boy: Do you like the punch?

Girl: No

Boy: Do you have any red socks?

Girl: No

Boy: Can you dance the Macarena?

Girl: Can you say "adios"?

Follow closed-ended questions up with open-ended questions.

The One-liner

Making comments, even if they're compliments, is nice, but it doesn't take the conversation anywhere. Here's an example.

Boy: That was a great movie

Girl: Yup

Boy: Sure is a nice car

Girl: Yup

Boy: You look nice

Girl: Yup

Boy: These burgers smell really good

Girl: Yup

Girl: You know anything besides one-liners?

Boy: Nope

Always follow statements up with open-ended questions.

Examples of Open-ended Questions

Closed-ended questions require only short answers. The table below shows common closed-ended questions and how you might follow them up.

Closed-ended Questions or Statements	Open-ended Questions or Requests
How was the campout? (fine)	Tell me about the campout
What do you do? (I'm an attorney)	What got you into that profession? What's that like?
Nice place, isn't it. (Yup)	What brings you here?
What a beautiful quilt. (Yup)	What's involved in making one of these?

Close-ended questions don't quite break the ice. They don't give the other person a great opportunity to say much. Use open-ended questions.

Here are more examples of open-ended questions or requests:

- Bring me up to date on your work (sports, project, etc.)
- Describe the town you grew up in.
- Give me an example.
- Give me the details.
- How did you 2 meet?
- How did you become interested in that?
- How did you come up with that idea?
- How did you get into that line of work?
- How did you make it happen?
- How do you 2 know each other?
- Tell me a little more about the work you do.
- Tell me about your vacation or holiday.
- Tell me more about that.
- What brought you here?
- What do you mean by that?
- What led you to that point?
- What leads you to say that?
- What proof do you have of that?
- What was the most enjoyable part of getting your Eagle?
- What will you do now?
- What's the most challenging part of your job?
- Why did you take up running?

Notice that most begin with "What," "Tell me," and "How."

Give acquaintances wiggle room

Be careful with acquaintances. You wouldn't want to open a conversation with, "How's your job at (fill in the blank)?" What if that person were just fired or laid off? Be careful when you're asking about an acquaintance's spouse or special friend. Maybe they broke up or are divorced. You don't want to put them on the spot. In stead, say something like:

- Bring me up to date on your work
- What's been going on with your family?

These questions allow them to tell you only what they want to reveal.

So, once you've broken the ice, then it's time to converse.

Step 6: Converse

Once you've introduced yourself and broken the ice, you're off and running. Now your job is to keep the conversation going and enjoy this person.

During the conversation, you'll want to remember two things:

- A conversation is like tennis
- Use a variety of conversation methods

A conversation is like tennis because you'll want to have the ball in your court part of the time, but then you'll want to hit it back over the net and let the other person talk. Try to keep it going back and forth. Sometimes they'll have it in their court a long time, sometimes you'll have it in your court a long time, but you want to keep it in their court longer. By doing this, you let them shine.

And you'll want to use a variety of conversation methods. Open-ended questions are the most powerful tool, but there are others. Here's a list.

- Open-ended questions
- Closed ended questions and statements
- Teasing
- Telling stories and jokes

The most important thing to remember is to relax and focus on the other person. You're helping them shine. You listen to them.

Below I've listed tips on how to keep the conversation going.

Look for free information

Free information is anything you can find out about the person through observation. You'll usually observe things in four areas:

- Things they tell us (I'm from New York, I play football, I have three kids, etc.)
- Things we see on them or in their environment (a picture, book, ring, a soccer uniform, etc.)

- Their behavior (their accent, something they're doing)
- The occasion or location (wedding, class, event, park, etc.)

Use this free information to get them to talk about themselves. Ask them about the pictures on their desk. "This is an interesting picture. Tell me about it." If they're wearing a school pin, ask them about it--"That's a sports pin, right? What do you have to do to get one?"

And don't forget to offer information about yourself, too. When someone asks, "What's going on?" answer with more than "Not much."

Free information is food for conversation. Feed the conversation. Tell more about yourself so that others can learn more about you.

Dig deeper

When you ask a question about a topic, don't immediately leave that topic. Dig deeper.

If the person mentions their vacation, pick up on the cue and dig deeper. Ask where she went, what she did, what was the highlight, weather she would go back. You'll make her feel good about her life and about taking the time with you.

Always follow up a question like "How's work?" with "What's been going on at work since the last time we spoke?" This way they know you really want to hear what is going on with work.

Listen with eyes, voice, & ears

When you're not talking, listen. And you must listen with more than your ears. You need to listen with your voice and eyes as well.

Make eye contact. Don't gaze about. Respond with verbal cues to show that you hear what the speaker says. Verbal cues include phrases like:

- Tell me more
- What happened first
- What happened next
- That must have been difficult
- Wow
- Uh-huh
- Yeah, and then?

Using these kinds of phrases makes people feel actively listened to.

Many people in a group of three or more people look around in the hope that others in the group will maintain eye contact on their behalf. But people don't feel listened to if you're not looking at them.

Most of us don't feel listened to, not by our bosses, spouses, or children. Give the gift of listening.

Remember: observing does not equal good listening. You need to give them verbal cues. You need to not daydream while they're talking. Finally, the goal of all this is not to listen, it's to have a conversation. You have to do more than listen.

Act confident

People who act nervous or uncomfortable make us nervous and uncomfortable. Your body language makes up a huge part of the conversation. Act confident and comfortable, even when you're not. This will help the other person feel comfortable.

You act confident and comfortable by making eye contact, smiling, and speaking up.

Express empathy

Everyone is entitled to be listened to, even when in the wrong. But you don't have to correct them. You can just listen and empathize.

If they tell you about something traumatic, instead of ignoring it, you can ask: What's this been like for you? If they tell you that they were sick, instead of ignoring it, you can ask: Are you okay now?

One of the things that will bind you to people is listening to their problems without judging them or trying to give them advice. The feeling of being listened to is one of the greatest gifts we can give in a conversation.

Restate

You know you understand someone when you can restate what they've said. This is often a powerful tool to not only keep the conversation going, but to really understand someone. One of the deepest needs we have is to be understood.

You restate by rephrasing two things:

- Their words
- Their tone and body language

So if someone has been telling you about this cool person they met at McDonalds, you might say: "Wow. You sound so excited. So he's from Texas and studying computers?"

Often you'll find out you didn't understand them correctly, and they'll clarify for you. Don't mimic their words back to them. Rephrase them with your own words. When you can put it in your own words, you know you understand.

Add people to the conversation

Can you see why going on double dates or going out in a group is often more fun? Not only is it easier to keep the conversation going, but also you get to enjoy more people.

This person may inject humor, another person will ask a great question, yet another person will have a great story. On and on it goes.

You'll want to think of a tennis game with more than two players. Each player needs some time to have the ball in his or her court. Because you've chosen to take on the responsibility to keep the conversation going, if you notice someone hasn't talked for a while direct the conversation their way. Ask them a question.

Avoid conversation killers

Avoid these conversation killers. And if someone else falls into one of these traps, be patient with them. They might not know they're doing it.

The FBI Agent

The FBI agent asks a string of questions that makes a person feel like they're being interviewed. Questions like "What do you do?"; "Are you married?"; "Do you have children?"; "Where do you come from?" lead to dead end conversations.

Instead of interviewing people, dig deeper into each area. Ask open-ended questions, and then offer something about yourself.

The One-liner

The one-liner makes statements and that's it. It's hard to respond to statements with anything more than a "yup". Ask open-ended questions, tell a story, and make a joke. Dig deeper into the other person.

Can you top that

We fall into the can-you-top-that trap when we don't try to empathize and listen to people. When they bring up a subject, we immediately want to tell them our story.

Before we tell our big story, we need to dig deeper into theirs. When someone tells you the awful day they just had, don't try to top it. Before you say anything about your awful day, dig deeper into theirs. When someone tells you about the bargain they found, don't try to top it. Stop and dig deeper. When someone tells you about something they've experienced, don't say, "Been there, done that." Dig deeper into their experience. Don't try to top it.

The Know it All

The know it all expresses his or her opinion and won't listen to or give time to anyone else.

Show an interest in your conversational partner's opinion, too. You're not the *only* person with opinions. It's fine to have and express opinions, but after we state our opinions ask, "What is your view?" It's up to us to engage the other person.

The Adviser

The adviser tries to fix people's problems. Don't try to fix people's problems. Most of the time you can't anyway. Just empathize with them.

When you mention a problem you might be having, do people offer advice without asking any questions? Have you ever done something, and as soon as you finished, someone told you it was wrong?

How does that make you feel when people do this?

Jumping in with unsolicited advice usually annoys people because, unless they ask, people usually aren't looking for advice. Instead of advice, give understanding with simple phrases such as: "I know you can work out a solution" or "I hope the job hunt goes well for you." Offer advice only when you are asked for it.

You don't have to make everything all better. Magnify their good points instead of harrowing them up with their mistakes.

The Interrupter

The interrupter butts in. He or she is more interested in their point than the other person in the conversation. Let the other person speak. Ask them questions to clarify. Restate what you think they're saying.

When you fully understand their point and have dug deeper into their story, add in your two cents.

The Monopolist

The monopolist hogs the conversational ball. They talk and talk and talk and talk. You should throw the conversational ball back after 4 to 5 minutes.

If someone else is monopolizing don't try to change him or her. You can't change them. You can give them the gift of listening, or when they take a breath, try to change the topic or direct the conversation to someone else with a question.

Step 7: Exit

At some point the conversation will run dry, you may need to go, or the person may need to go. Now's the time to exit. In the exit you signal that the conversation needs to end and you thank the person.

Don't melt from conversations. Make a positive impression by shaking hands or clapping them on the back (or whatever is appropriate) and saying goodbye as you leave. Be prepared with exit lines. Here are some examples:

- Well, I've got to get to class. Nice talking
- Well, it's been very interesting talking to you. I need to scoot on home.
- That's so interesting. Well, I wanted to talk to a few other people before the dance ends. It was nice meeting you.

Don't feel bad about exiting. You do need to move around and meet with others. And that's it. Seven easy steps.

Wobblers Win

Now the last thing you need to remember is that wobblers are the ones that win. Imagine seeing a five year-old boy who still crawls and rolls about.

"Why don't you try to walk?" you say. "There are so many great things you can do if you walk. Football, swimming, hiking. Don't you get sick of being cooped up in this house? And look at your knees. They're as rough as chicken's feet."

"Oh, no," he says. "I tried walking, I just can't do it."

"All you need to do is keep at it," you say.

"No, I'm no good at walking. I fell and made a fool of myself. It was so embarrassing."

Isn't that ridiculous? But we do it all the time. Oh, I'm not good at math, we say. I'm not good at sports. I'm not good at reading. I'm not a people person.

You need to wobble before you walk. Everyone does. You need to wobble a bit as you learn these conversation skills. Don't let a few wobblers get you down. Get back up and try again until you figure it out.

Anyone can learn to enjoy great conversations.

Time to Have Some Fun!

Now that you know what to do, it's time to do it. During the next week practice you skills on:

- An adult you don't know very well
- Someone in your family
- Someone younger than you

Remember to perform the 2-minute preparation before each of these conversations and to use open-ended questions.

Once you've talked to these three people, continue to work on your skills. Observe what others do and practice on people who you think are easy to talk to -the people not engaged in conversations, those younger than you, and those you already know. Then when you want to meet someone or build a relationship with someone that makes you a bit nervous, you can relax because you'll already know how.

Focus on others, and you'll have a great time.

