

How to Make Friends

Start with an acquaintance. See her walking towards you. Acknowledge. Smile. Greet. Toss out a passing pleasantry. If there is a response, gracefully accept it. If not, blame extraneous circumstances. Search for her as you maneuver everyday life. Exchange small talk. Offer her a compliment. Congratulations, you have just made a friend.

Start with an acquaintance. See him walking towards you. Acknowledge. Smile. Greet. Notice him later the same day. Make eye contact. Offer an upwards nod. Accept the inevitable return nod. Congratulations, you have just made a friend.

Laugh at her jokes. Listen to her vent about the most recent drama. Meet her other friends. Make a memorable and positive first impression. Spend time getting to know the individuals that form this group, from their quirks to their beliefs, but focus mainly on her. Traverse the web of connections that she has spun; figure out where each social strand leads, how many knots and intersections each contains, and how easily each could snap. Lure out her secrets by offering her some of your own; embrace emotional depth. Mold your connection with her into a separate and unknotted cord that appears to be unbreakable. Stay up late one night discussing her trust issues and your emotional detachment, her dysfunctional family dynamics and your lack of self-confidence, her sexual frustration and your fear of a flame-filled afterlife. Exchange tired, yet knowing glances the next day whenever you encounter each other. Congratulations, you have just made a best friend.

Laugh at his jokes. Listen to him vent about the latest football game. Meet his buddies. Make a non-threatening yet positive first impression. Enter into the group lowest on the social ladder. Observe both him and the group itself, but focus mainly on the interactions. Map out the

rankings, from you to the top; figure out who is scrambling for higher ground, who is dangling from their rung, and who is frozen in place. Probe the others for weak points, smiling innocently and constantly switching your target. Climb the ladder until you are directly beneath him; cement yourself there. Spend a night drinking with him, sharing stories from the past about childhood, family, and girls; avoid emotional depth. Act more drunk but tell less humorous stories than he does; bolster his superiority. The next day, exchange friendly nods and accept his invitation to party again the following weekend. Congratulations, you have just made a best friend.

Spend more time alone with her. Watch her favorite romantic comedy in your room, cuddling with her the entire time. Stay up late multiple nights in a row, conversing about topics ranging from the nonsensical to the psychological. Take her to the local cinema. Share the popcorn. Make out the entire time. Shorten the social cord that binds you to her. Meet her family when they come to visit. Charm them with genuine inquiries about their lives and humble responses about your own. Wave with one hand as her family drives away; hold her hand in the other and give it a gentle, knowing squeeze. Slowly walk back to her room enveloped in a comfortable silence, give her a lingering hug, and whisper a sweet “good night” into her ear. Leave. Realize she loves you. Congratulations, you now have a girlfriend.

Spend more time alone with him. Watch his favorite action movie in your room, sipping cheap beers the entire time. Stay up late multiple nights in a row, killing thousands of aliens and each other on a distant, virtual planet. Drive to the local cinema. Buy separate popcorns. Comment on both the lead actress and the constant explosions the entire time. Climb onto his rung and share it. Listen to him talk with his family on his cell phone. Smile as he briefly describes you. After he hangs up, gently mock him for saying “I love you” to his mother.

Laugh, say “good night,” and walk briskly back to your room surrounded by uncomfortable silence. Realize you love him. Congratulations, you still have a girlfriend when all you want is a boyfriend.

Escape. Run away from her. Struggle when you notice the social noose you molded tighten around your neck. Resist her attempts to suffocate you emotionally; avoid emotional depth. Go through the motions of your fracturing relationship half-heartedly. Don’t try to fix the cracks. Plunge her into a web of panic, confusion, and despair. Stop cuddling, making out, holding hands, hugging, staying up late together. Blame extraneous circumstances. Make her blame you. Force her to cut the tie you carefully crafted. Congratulations, she’s gone.

Escape. Run away towards him. Struggle when you notice yourself slipping from your perch next to him. Attempt to grab onto him; watch him resist your attempts to forge an emotional connection. Go through the motions of your fracturing relationship overeagerly. Try to fix the cracks. Sink into a web of panic, confusion, and despair. Stop sipping beers, commenting, mocking, laughing, staying up late together. Blame extraneous circumstances. Make him blame you. Force him to push you off the rung. Congratulations, he’s gone.

You hurt her.

He hurt you.

Start with an acquaintance. Acknowledge. Smile. Greet. Lather. Rinse. Repeat. Wonder how long this friendship will last.