

TRUE OR FALSE FRIEND?

ARE YOU A GOOD, MAYBE
EVEN GREAT FRIEND TO
YOUR PALS? FIND OUT
BY TAKING OUR QUIZ.



On elementary school, making friends—and keeping them—was most likely a snap for you. You played kickball with boys from your neighborhood or had slumber parties with girls from school. **Conflicts** rarely escalated beyond a minor disagreement on the playground. But now that you're getting older and your interests are changing, your friendships are **evolving** too. That can be really confusing.

Test your knowledge about true friendship among teenagers by answering these questions. Then turn the page to read the answers.

1 When John was in middle school, he and his friends played a lot of sports. Now in high school, John wants to audition for the school musical, but his pals have never been into the theater scene and two of them recently said that the drama club is for losers. What should John do?

- A.** Try out for the play, regardless of what his friends think.
- B.** Forget his acting dreams and stick to what he knows—sports. He shouldn't run the risk of offending his pals.

WORDS TO KNOW

Conflict: A situation in which there is a serious disagreement that could result in argument, and even violence.

Evolve: To change from one state to another.

Audition: An activity in which a person tries out for an event.

Gossip: To spread information about someone.

Critical: Inclined to make strong negative comments about something or someone.

Endeavor: A serious and determined effort.

Communication: The process in which information is exchanged.

Cherish: To deeply appreciate something or someone.

ARE YOU BEING A FRIEND WHEN YOU SPREAD GOSSIP?



2 Erin's friend Beth likes to gossip about kids in their social group. Beth usually picks on kids' looks: their clothes, skin condition, and hair. Erin used to think Beth's comments were funny, but now she thinks she's just being mean. What should Erin do?

- A.** Keep her thoughts to herself and stay quiet when Beth is being **critical** of others. As long as Erin isn't actively participating in the gossip, it's OK.
- B.** Try to talk to Beth about not being so negative about others. It's important to be as honest as possible with your friends.

3 Theresa has recently started dating a boy. He's her first boyfriend, and she's nervous about being in a relationship. But when she tries to talk about him with her best friend, Debbie, Debbie always changes the subject or tells Theresa that she's making a big deal out of nothing. What should Theresa do?

- A.** Forget about trying to talk about her boyfriend with Debbie and just

hang out with her, doing the things they always did before Theresa had a boyfriend.

- B.** Calmly, but assertively, tell Debbie that she needs her best friend's advice on how to handle the relationship. Tell her that she would do the same for her if Debbie were in a relationship with someone.

4 Brian and a new girl at school, Samantha, are friends. They both play soccer and like to talk about the sport, plus they share the same taste in music. But Brian isn't interested in dating Samantha, and she seems fine with just being friends. Brian's buddies, however, keep telling him to go out with her. They think it's weird for a guy and girl to just be friends. What should Brian do?

- A.** Realize that his buddies are right. Samantha and he should be a couple and he should ask her to be his girlfriend at the first opportunity.
- B.** Ignore his buddies and maintain the friendship as is with Samantha. If both he and she are happy, why mess up a good thing?

ANSWERS

QUESTION 1. A. John should audition for the musical. The teen years are a time to do different things and pursuing a stage experience qualifies as different for John. His friends should support this **endeavor**. “Good friends like you and care about you for the person you are,” says Dr. Roberta K. Beach, professor emerita of pediatrics and adolescent medicine at the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine. “They should be there to support you in whatever positive activity you do.” If John’s friends make fun of him or criticize him, they really aren’t

his pals anymore. Being a good friend means respecting that a buddy might have different interests than your own and being OK with that.

QUESTION 2. B. Erin should speak up and try to convince Beth to change her ways. “A bad friend is someone who is always gossiping about another friend,” says Cassie Nichole Miller, 17, of Mena, Arkansas. “It makes me think they’re doing the same thing to me behind my back.” It’s hurtful to gossip about others, and if you’re pals with a gossip, it’s your duty to try to straighten out your

friend. Also, trust is a crucial quality to have in a friendship, and people who spread rumors are not trustworthy. If a friend gossips about others, there’s a good chance that he or she gossips about you. Katie O’Connor, 14, of Granite Bay, California, steers clear of that type of person. “I have complete confidence that my friends will trust me because I can tell one of them a secret and that secret will always be kept,” Katie says. “The same goes for me—they can always trust me to keep a secret too.”

QUESTION 3. B. Theresa needs to be honest with Debbie and tell her that she needs—and values—Debbie’s advice. And Debbie needs to be less selfish and listen. “Any good relationship is based on good



BEING FRIENDS WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX IS GOOD FOR BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS.

communication,” Beach says. “One way to be a good friend is to listen without judging. The most important skill in a healthy friendship is to learn how to listen so the other person feels heard.” In this particular situation, though, Theresa needs to be careful to not talk about her new boyfriend all the time when she’s with Debbie. Doing so would be selfish on Theresa’s part.

QUESTION 4. B. Brian should keep things as is with Samantha.

Believe it or not, guys and girls don’t have to be romantically involved with each other to be happy. Ray Mesa, 19, of Grand Forks, North Dakota, **cherishes** his friends who are girls. “They listen better than guys,” he says. According to Beach, it’s healthy for teen boys and girls to be friends. “In your teen years, you are more capable of having friendships with the opposite sex,” she says. “The advantage of doing so is that it helps you learn more about how the opposite sex thinks, and it teaches you to appreciate a perspective different from your own.”

—Alexis Burling

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 Are friends supposed to agree on everything and always get along? Is it possible to never have an argument with a friend?

2 Have you ever had a major falling-out with a close friend? If so, were you able to patch things up and continue the friendship? How did you do it?

3 What are the differences in friendships between kids in elementary school and friendships between kids in middle school or high school? What are the similarities?

CALLING IT QUILTS

When is it time to end a friendship? Dr. Beach offers these tips:

1 First, try to resolve any problems with your friend by being honest about your feelings, and by listening to what he or she has to say.

2 Examine your feelings about the friendship. If it’s time to stop being friends, you’ll know.

3 Work on accepting that your friend is no longer someone you want to

spend time with. Give yourself time to accept this realization. It’s never easy letting go of friends.

4 Realize that ending the friendship will hurt you emotionally, especially if your friend doesn’t feel the same way you do.

5 Be kind to the friend you’re splitting up with. Try to be as mature as possible toward him or her. At the same time, make sure your self-esteem is protected.

IT’S OK TO STOP BEING FRIENDS WITH SOMEONE— JUST BE RESPECTFUL WHEN YOU GO YOUR SEPARATE WAYS.

