

BEYOND SEPTEMBER™ · FREE GUIDE

How to Become Someone's Friend

A short, practical guide for the moments when you think, “I don’t know what to say,” “I feel like a creep,” or “They decline every invitation.” Friendship is a skill people can practice — and another person’s no is not proof that something is wrong with you.

First: you are not a creep for wanting connection

Friendship is not a personality test. It usually grows from familiarity, small acts of attention, and time. You do not have to become louder, funnier, or more impressive. The goal is to be warm, curious, reliable, and respectful — while noticing who returns that effort.

1. Start with familiar, low-pressure contact

- Choose repetition. Go to the same class, library, café, walking group, volunteer shift, or break room at a regular time. Familiar faces become easier to greet.
- Use the smallest opening. Smile, wave, say “Hi, good to see you,” or use the person’s name. A short exchange counts.
- Notice before you invite. Ask about something already shared: “How did your appointment go?” Remembering a detail communicates care.

2. Keep conversation balanced

Try this rhythm: ask, listen, share, return. Ask one open question, listen to the answer, share a related sentence about yourself, then return the conversation to them.

“How did you get interested in that?” · “What has your week been like?” · “You mentioned your dog last time — how is she?”

You do not need a perfect line. Avoid turning every exchange into an interview or telling your whole story at once. Let trust grow in layers.

3. Make invitations specific, small, and easy to decline

- “I’m getting coffee at 10 on Saturday. Want to join me for 20 minutes?”
- “I’m walking at the park after work Tuesday. You’re welcome to come.”
- “A few of us are eating in the break room at noon if you want to sit with us.”

A specific invitation is easier to answer than “We should hang out.” Add a genuine easy out: “No pressure if not.” Then accept the answer without making them reassure you.

When people keep saying no

A declined invitation can mean timing, money, energy, caregiving, anxiety, or simply a mismatch. It is information, not a verdict on your worth.

- After one no: stay friendly. You can invite them once more on another day.
- After repeated no's with no alternative offered: stop inviting for now. Keep the greeting warm and put your energy toward people who show some return.
- If you offer donuts or another treat: place them in a shared space and say, "They're here if you want one." A gift should not create an obligation to connect.
- Look for reciprocity: they ask you something, remember a detail, initiate sometimes, accept occasionally, or suggest another time.

4. Be someone who feels safe to know

- Be reliable. Arrive when you said you would. Keep small promises.
- Respect privacy. Do not repeat personal information without permission.
- Respect boundaries. A no, delayed reply, short answer, or request for space is not an invitation to push harder.
- Repair small mistakes. "I interrupted you — sorry. Please finish." Simple repairs build trust.
- Let support go both ways. Ask what would help instead of assuming, and accept care when it is offered.

5. Use a four-week practice

- Week 1: choose one repeated place and learn one name.
- Week 2: ask one follow-up question and remember the answer.
- Week 3: make one specific, low-pressure invitation.
- Week 4: notice who reciprocates and invest there.

If loneliness is making suicidal thoughts louder

Do not wait for a new friendship to carry this alone. Tell someone directly: "I'm having a hard time and I need company." Call or text 988 for immediate conversation and support. Friendship takes time; support is available now.

If you are struggling right now, call or text 988. Free, confidential, 24/7.

Sources and further reading

- U.S. Surgeon General, Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community (2023): hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf
- National Institute on Aging, Loneliness and Social Isolation — Tips for Staying Connected: nia.nih.gov/health/loneliness-and-social-isolation/loneliness-and-social-isolation-tips-staying-connected
- University of Minnesota Extension, Building Social Support and Connections: extension.umn.edu/community/family-and-wellness/mental-health/stress-and-change/building-social-support-and-connections

Beyond September™ is an awareness and education initiative, not a medical, therapy, or crisis service. This guide offers general education, not a promise that any action will lead to friendship. Respect your safety and other people's boundaries. In immediate danger, call 911.