

How to Make Friends And Get a Social Life

Getting a social life isn't as complicated as it may seem, although it can require some patience. The thing is that most people make and keep friends without really thinking about how they do it. They just picked up the skills automatically as they grew up. If you've always been more of the shy, loner type than you'll probably appreciate some pointers.

Pretty much any one can have a group of friends if they want to. You need to have these broad factors in order. People who have trouble making friends often go wrong somewhere here:

A fairly decent personality and social skills

This one's obvious. The more rewarding you are to be around, the more easily you'll make friends. You can be far from perfect though. Even people who most of us would consider annoying often have a social network.

Knowledge about how to make friends

That's what this article will cover. Most people have this knowledge instinctively. I had to piece it together bit by bit, even the stuff that seems really obvious.

Enough guts to invite people out fairly easily

This one has held me back personally. I'd want to invite someone out, but I'd always have some reason to decide against it. I was hardly a nervous wreck, but I'd be just slightly anxious enough that it would make the difference between inviting someone out and not.

Enough internal desire to have a group of friends

Some people want a group of friends in theory, to ease their feelings of loneliness, but at the same time they're a little indifferent to the concept. Some of us aren't as naturally social as others. When your whole heart isn't into the idea of having a group of friends, your efforts can stall out, or be very start and stop.

You like other people

Seems too obvious to write, but I used to be quite negative towards other people. I always had a reason to not want to be friends with someone. I've read lonely people in general tend to be a little more harsh in their judgments of others.

Here are my thoughts on how to get a group of friends together:

Take the attitude that you've just moved into town and need to make a new circle of friends from scratch

There's no point in having the image of yourself as being a desperate, lonely loser. That's easier said than done of course. But it's not totally rare for someone to have to start from zero.

Get an outside life on your own

Go see some live music, go check out the local bars and have a drink or two by yourself, go see some stand-up comedy, go to a sports bar and watch the game, start going to a rock climbing gym, take some classes, if you're in college then join some associations and clubs, walk around interesting neighborhoods, go to any interesting local events advertised in the paper, if you're going to read or play on your laptop you might as well go to a coffee shop to do it, etc., etc., etc.,

Doing these things will take the edge of your loneliness. It will make you a more interesting person. It will also fill your head with knowledge of things to do and places to go when you are hanging around people.

Also just being in situations where there are people around, even if you're not interacting with them all that much, gives you some of the feelings of having a social life. There are plenty of chances to meet people as well obviously.

I got into more detail on this topic here: [Ways To Improve Your Social Prospects Before You Try Meeting Anyone](#)

Figure out what types of people you think you may want to hang around and be friends with

Once you know this you'll have a better idea of where you need to be to meet them. Also, are there certain things these people are interested in

meet them. Also, are there certain things these people are interested in or knowledgeable about you need to brush up on in order to be around them more easily?

It's easier to hang around people similar to you. If you're naturally interested in a certain hobby, you'll have a pretty simple time meeting and hanging out with other people who into the same thing.

You may need to expand the range of people who you could consider potential friends. For example, you may get along better with people a little older or younger than you, and are limiting yourself if you only search within your exact age.

If you don't like who you are, you may not want to hang around similar people because it acts as a mirror that reflects your shortcomings back at you. Even though you may want to improve yourself, you should be comfortable with who you are right now.

Know something about the nature of friendships

If you're inexperienced with making friends, you may see the process as being more drawn-out and complex than it really is. Often all you have to do to make a friend is meet someone you naturally click with and hang around with them enough. You also don't have to know them for months before applying the 'friend' label to them. One characteristic of more social people is that they'll throw the word friend around pretty loosely when describing their relationships with people. But it almost becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in a way.

No friendship is perfect. Everyone has some mildly annoying traits that their friends will put up with and eventually adapt to. I used to be a bit uptight and had unrealistic expectations about how people should act.

The stereotype is that male friendships are more shallow than women's and based more on doing things together than emotional sharing. I think this is partially true and can make it relatively simple to get your foot in the door with guys. Just be the person they play video games with or the guy on their sports team.

Get more out of your current contacts

This won't apply to people who have just moved to a new area and don't know anyone, but often you'll already have the seeds of a social life around you. You don't necessarily have to go out and meet ten strangers to have one. It's a lot easier to start turning existing contacts into full-fledged friends than it is to meet new ones.

There are probably a handful of people you already know who could end up becoming part of a new social circle. I'm talking about people like:

- Acquaintances you're friendly with when you run into each other, but who you never see otherwise.
- People at work or in your classes who you get along with.
- Friends of people you know who you've gotten along with.
- Someone who has shown an interest in being your friend but you never really took up the offer.
- People you very occasionally hang out with, who you could see more.
- Friends you've gradually lost contact with who you could call up again.
- Siblings and relatives close to your age.

You just have to take the step of doing more social activities with them than you usually do. More on that below.

Meet some new people

Getting more out of your current relationships can go along way, but it doesn't always work. Sometimes you're at a point where you need to meet entirely new people. Not having easy access to potential new friends is a big barrier for many people in creating a social circle. I go into more detail here: [Places And Ways To Meet New People](#). Overall, the easiest thing to do is meet one or two cool people and then get to know all their friends. If you hang out with fifteen people, you shouldn't have to meet them all individually.

If you hit it off with someone get their contact information

If you meet someone cool don't assume that you'll run into them again. Get their phone number or maybe their email address. If you're shy this may take a small amount of nerve the first few times, but it's one of those things that ceases to seem like a big deal at all once you're used to it. You can also get used to the odd rejection quite quickly. Also make

sure people have your contact info in case they ever want to invite you along somewhere.

Invite potential friends to do something with you

Ask the people you get along with to hang out. Give them a call, or ask them if you see them around in person. Invite them to go out to do whatever (See: [Activities People Do When They Hang Around Each Other](#) for some really basic thoughts on this topic).

This is the most important part. You can meet all the people you want, and they can think you're great, but if you don't take any steps to do something with them in the future, then you won't form many new relationships with anyone. They'll stay as the guy you talk to in class, or the girl you chat to at work in the break room.

This is basic stuff, but lonely people often hit a wall here. There may be someone they joke around with at work, or chat to in one of their classes, but they won't take the step of inviting them out and taking the relationship to the next level.

If you want a social life, you've got to make it happen for yourself

Being too passive is another big error. If you want to get a group of friends, assume you'll have to do all the work. Don't just wait around hoping someone will invite you out on the weekend. If you want to go out then get on the phone and organize something.

Don't worry too much about seeming desperate or needy. Take the attitude that it's about you and you'll do what needs to be done to make some friends. Who cares if a handful of people think you're a bit too eager along the way if it all eventually works out?

Don't take it personally if people seem indifferent to you

Other people are often harmlessly thoughtless and preoccupied in the sense that they'd be happy if they hung out with you, but they wouldn't think to ask you themselves. Sometimes you have to take an interest in them before you appear on their radar.

Similarly, some people are more lax and laid back than you'd like about returning your emails or calls. They're not consciously trying to reject you, they're just a little more loosey-goosey than most.

Don't get discouraged by setbacks too easily

If someone refuses your invitation because they're busy or not sure if they can make it out then don't give up. Try again another time. Also, even the act of making an invitation sends the message that you like someone and want to hang out with them. They may be unable to meet that one time, but now see you as someone they could possibly have fun with in the future.

When you meet potential friends be realistic about your importance in their lives and how long it may take to become buddies with them. They probably already have a social circle and their world won't end if it doesn't work out with you. As such, don't get too discouraged if they're not knocking down the door to hang out with you a day after you met them. They may be busy and your plans may not pan out for another few weeks.

Sometimes it just won't work out with someone. You'll get along at the time, and they may express an interest in hanging out in the future, but for whatever reason things don't materialize. It happens to everyone and is nothing to get too down about. Keep the bigger picture in mind and continue meeting people.

The whole 'taking initiative and don't give up too easily' thing can be a missing piece of the puzzle for people, but sometimes it still seems that no one is interested in you. You may want to check this out: [When People Don't Seem Interested In Being Friends With You](#)

Have a basic grasp of how to make plans

Depending on what works for you, you may want to do something one-on-one with someone or in a larger group. If you know a bunch of people plus your potential new friend are going to do something anyways, you can also ask if you can come along.

People often have busy lives so don't make it unnecessarily hard for them to hang out with you. For example, it's easier to invite them out for a drink right after work than to ask them to travel an hour out of their way

to meet you at some obscure, far-flung place.

Sometimes you do have to be persuasive to get people to go out with you. Someone might not feel like going out that night, or you may have to convince someone why it would be better to go to one place instead of the other.

Making plans can be tedious and unpredictable at times. Try your best to get used to it. It personally helped me to accept this wasn't a situation where I could perfectly control and arrange everything ahead of time. I had to come to peace with the randomness of trying to organize something with one or more other people.

If inviting people out and arranging plans all seems like a big hassle, it also probably feels that way for them at times. They shouldn't always have to step up and organize things for you. Do some of the lifting yourself at times.

Never turn down an invitation

If someone invites you to do something, then you should go. Why turn down a free chance to get out there with people?

If you're more of a shy or solitary person it's easy to mull over the invitation and rationalize that it won't be that fun and that you don't want to go. Ignore those thoughts and go anyways. You never can be sure how fun something will be until you show up and see how it is for yourself.

Sometimes you'll have to inconvenience yourself for the sake of your social life. You may get invited to a movie you don't particularly want to see, or someone might call you up on Friday evening as you're about to go to bed, asking if you want to go out. Whenever you have two or more people in the equation, you're going to have to compromise sometimes. Again, just being out there outweighs these minor annoyances.

Don't be picky about who you hang out with at first

Your initial goal is to just get some sort of social life going. So hang out with whoever you get along with and who seems interested in doing things with you. The first people you meet may not be your 100% ideal friends. The benefits of just being out there as opposed to brooding at home outweigh this. At the very least, it's easier to make further friends when you've already got a few. Also, when you're forming your first-ever group of friends, you don't totally know what you like or want in other people. You have to see what different types are like in a friend capacity firsthand, and if you get along with them.

I also give this advice because lonely people tend to be more negative about people in general. Less naturally outgoing types can also be more picky about who they choose to spend their time with. If you naturally tend to be down on everyone you meet you need to make an effort to consciously override these feelings. Plus, don't have an unrealistic self-image that demands you can only hang out with a certain caliber of people. Be realistic about yourself and your circumstances.

As a general rule, if you more-or-less get along with someone, actually become friends with them first, and then decide if want to be friends. If you're picky, you can come up with reasons not to befriend just about anyone ahead of time. But when you're already hanging out with someone, and you've skipped over your pickiness, you often find you like their company, even if they wouldn't have been good 'on paper' in your mind beforehand.

Once you know some people, build on this foundation

Once you've made a regular friend or two you've got a good base to work from. If you're not super social in nature, one or two good buddies may be all you need to be happy. At the very least, it should be enough to get rid of that desperate lonely feeling.

Sooner or later you'll end up meeting your friend's friends. If you hit it off with them then you can start hanging out with them as well. You can also become a member of the whole group with time. This is also a good reason not to be too picky about who you associate with. You may feel lukewarm about a particular person but find you really hit it off with the people in their social circle.

You can continue to meet entirely new people. Having friends will make this easier as they'll do things like invite you to parties or keep you company in places where there are new people to potentially meet.

Maintain your friendships

Keep in regular touch with friends through the phone, email, MSN, Facebook, etc. Hang out with them on a regular basis. Every friend and acquaintance has a right amount of time you need to spend with them. Some relationships are more casual and you only hang out every month or less, other people will wonder if you've died if you they don't see you every week. Common sense will tell you what these amounts are.

Don't be needy and pester one friend too much and rely on them to meet all your social and entertainment needs.

You may not have a problem with meeting people and hanging around them once or twice, but you may run into trouble in the long run. Don't fall out of touch with your new friends and acquaintances. Various traits can get you at this stage:

- You can feel insecure. You'll convince yourself your new friends don't really like you and drop contact with them in response to this imagined slight.
- Your lower need to be social may cause you to not want to hang around with them as often as you need to keep the friendship going.
- Shyness may make you too wimpy to call them up and make plans.

If you haven't talked to someone in a while it's not really a big deal. You can still get back in touch and catch up. It's not even that awkward. Don't think you automatically have to throw the friendship away.

Be patient

Building up a good social life takes time so stick with it. It may take a while before you get a chance to meet some people you're compatible with. After that, it may be a few months before you're consistently hanging around with each other. It may be a year or more before you feel like you're really, really friends with them. It takes time to go from having no plans, to having plans with the same person every other weekend, to having plans with a variety of people three times a week.

On the other hand, sometimes you can get a social life going quite quickly. Joining a club or team may give you an instant social circle. Also, if you're extremely outgoing, you can literally go out to some bars and just introduce yourself to people. Overall all though, don't get discouraged if things are a little slower than what feels ideal.