

Small Talk and Friend Making Tips

MAKING SMALL TALK

Be a good listener. The most likable kids are the ones who listen and actually hear what others are saying. The key is to really be interested in the other person and focus more on them than on yourself when talking. Practice listening noises (“uh huh”, “oh”, “that’s cool”) or statements to show you heard them (“so you like horses”). REMEMBER what you’ve heard and ask about it later (“How was that concert you went to?”).

Ask questions. Almost everyone likes to talk about themselves, or to feel like others are interested in them. Safe questions include, “What kind of music do you like?” “What do you like to do for fun?” “What school do you go to?” “What class do you have next?” Try to identify a common interest or experience!

Make eye contact when listening. If you don’t, people will think you aren’t interested or aren’t paying attention. Plus, you get important information by watching people when they talk (like how interested they are). You don’t have to have a staring contest, but try to make SOME eye contact.

Be yourself. Trying too hard to impress others rarely works out. Be genuine, and try to appear calm, confident and positive.

Be positive and kind. When you’re nice to people, they will usually be nice back. Also, people are drawn to those who are upbeat and positive.

MAKING FRIENDS

Find common ground. Ask about or point out common interests or experiences. (“I think you’re in my homeroom.” “You like [band name from shirt]? Me too!”)

Invite them to hang out or do something together. Plan to meet up or do something fun.

Say hi. When you see them, say hi! Try to use their name (“Hi, Sara!”), ask how they’re doing (“How’s it going?”) and check in on things you know are important to them (“How did your track meet go?”).

Take turns in games and activities. Letting other people go first or calmly waiting until they have taken their turn makes activities way more fun for kids. They will like to do things with you.

Join a group or organization. This is truly one of the best and easiest ways to make friends. Join a group related to one of your interests (art, sport, church) or a youth group of some kind. When you see the same people regularly and do fun things together, it can be easier to spark a friendship (though you’ll still need to talk to them and invite them to spend time outside of group at some point to cement the friendship).

GENERAL TIPS

Give compliments. “I like your drawing/shirt/haircut.” “Nice kick.” “You’re good at this—could you show me how to do it like that?”

Be polite. Please and thank you. Taking turns. Being patient. Respecting personal space. Not being rough.

Don’t be too bossy—let friends make some decisions. “What do you feel like doing?”