

# 12 Tips for Making and Keeping Friends

- 1. Reach out.** Don't always wait for someone else to make the first move. A simple "hi" and a smile go a long way. It may sound corny, but you'll be amazed at the response you'll receive when you extend a friendly greeting.
- 2. Get involved.** Join clubs that interest you; take special classes inside or outside of school. Seek out neighborhood and community organizations and other opportunities to give service to others.
- 3. Let people know that you're interested in them.** Don't just talk about yourself; ask questions about them and their interests. Make this a habit and you'll have mastered the art of conversation. It's amazing how many people haven't yet grasped this basic social skill.
- 4. Be a good listener.** This means looking at people while they're talking to you and genuinely paying attention to what they're saying. (A long litany of "uh-huhs" is a dead giveaway that your mind is somewhere else.)
- 5. Risk telling people about yourself.** When it feels right, let your interests and talents be known. For example, if you love science fiction and you'd like to know others who feel the same way, spread the word. If you're an expert on the history of science fiction, you might want to share your knowledge. BUT . . .
- 6. Don't be a show-off.** Not everyone you meet will share your interests and abilities. (On the other hand, you shouldn't have to hide them—which you won't, once you find people who like and appreciate you.)
- 7. Be honest.** Tell the truth about yourself and your convictions. When asked for your opinion, be sincere. Friends appreciate forthrightness in each other. BUT . . .
- 8. When necessary, temper your honesty with diplomacy.** The truth doesn't have to hurt. It's better to say "Gee, your new haircut is interesting" than to exclaim "You actually paid money for THAT?" There are times when frankness is inappropriate and unnecessary.
- 9. Don't just use your friends as sounding boards for your problems and complaints.** Include them in the good times, too.
- 10. Do your share of the work.** That's right, work. Any relationship takes effort. Don't always depend on your friends to make the plans and carry the weight.
- 11. Be accepting.** Not all of your friends have to think and act like you do. (Wouldn't it be boring if they did?)
- 12. Learn to recognize the so-called friends you can do without.** Some gifted kids get so lonely that they put up with anyone—including friends who aren't really friends at all. Follow tips 1–11 and this shouldn't happen to you.