

How to Break Up With A Friend: 7 Steps to Follow



Have you ever ended a relationship on the wrong note and later regretted it? Knowing how to break up with a friend is vital to prevent things from getting messy or awkward. Moreover, if things end pleasantly, we get to hold onto our good memories with that person.

But what are the right words to say when breaking up with a friend? What are the proper steps to take when ending things with a friend?

This article discusses when and how you should break up with a friend and the dos and don'ts of ending a toxic friendship.

When should you break up with a friend?

Some friendships, especially newfound ones, could fade away naturally. In such situations, you don't need to break up. You just need to give the person space and set more boundaries; it will fade with time.

However, for a close friend who means a lot to you, it is always difficult to let go, and you may find any reason to hang on to that friend. But sometimes, the best thing to do is to end it. So, how do you know when to stop in your tracks and turn back?

When a friendship is no longer mutually beneficial, you might end it, especially if it has become unhealthy. Dr Folorunso Stephen, a clinical psychologist at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), says it might be time to move on if you no longer share the same values or purposes.

Also, while we are advised to tolerate others, our boundaries with friends might not be strong enough to hold against influences. That is, our friends influence us, and once you don't share the same values, their values might rub off on you. In such situations, you should consider ending the relationship if it has become negative.

How to break up with a friend



Once you decide it's time to end a friendship, you must know how to break up with a friend properly. The first thing to know is that ghosting a friend shouldn't be your go-to option. Doing this may give them the wrong idea and is also disrespectful.

It's only acceptable when you have tried breaking up, but the friend doesn't respect your boundaries. However, whatever step you take towards breaking up should be respectful; if that isn't the case, then it shouldn't be taken.

Here are some steps to take to break up with a friend nicely:

Step 1: Don't do it over a text

Texting could be more flimsy, and they could easily misinterpret your intentions. No one wants to get a text saying, "Let's end things here." Even if you state your reasons, it doesn't give the other person the chance to be heard.

Dr Jane Eveshoyan, a therapist and owner of [Talk Time with Dr Jane](#), doesn't think it's a respectful way to break up. She says, "You will leave many things unsaid, and the person will feel disrespected."

Dr Jane says that it's not enough to send a text for a relationship that was once important to you. The other person needs closure, so you should allow your friend to explain and maybe apologise if there's a need. She also advises that even in long-distance friendships, you should do a video call rather than send a text.

Step 2: Journal your thoughts

Don't be surprised by how easily emotions can sway you. Before making this decision, you must have spoken to your friend several times.

So, journaling your thoughts is best once you have decided to end things. Write down your reasons for the breakup to remind yourself why this is necessary. This will help you stay true to your words.

Step 3: Meet in public

A public meeting is the safest option. You don't want to be in your comfort zone or take the seriousness of the conversation lightly. Also, things might get too emotional or physically unsafe if not done in public. Meeting at the park or over lunch helps keep things in check at both ends.

Step 4: Appreciate the person

To begin the discussion, Dr Jane advises that you first appreciate the person. No matter the reason for the breakup, if you're ending it respectfully, it means you once cherished the relationship.

The person might not have been your best friend, but you sure have shared good moments. So, let your friend know you have not forgotten the good moments by appreciating the person's role in your life.

Step 5: Be clear and direct

Dr Stephen says you shouldn't leave room for misunderstanding by leaving them with the wrong impression. Even if you don't have plans to stay friends, you don't want to end things poorly, so explain things clearly. You might be tempted to play the blame game, but this will mess things up, so choose your words carefully.

Start your statements with 'I' instead of 'you.' Doing this will show that you are not trying to blame the other party. Instead of saying, "You always belittle me," say, "I need a friend who encourages and cheers me on."

Alternatively, you can also use the "I feel" approach. That is, "I feel belittled," rather than "you belittle me." Using such an approach makes the other person less likely to become defensive.

DDrJane says you must give the person good examples to support your points. Your friend may get defensive, so providing clear examples will help disarm them and prevent misunderstandings.

Step 6: Let the other person talk

Even though you've decided at this point, do let the person talk. Hearing your friend's perspective makes the breakup fair. In case of misunderstandings or assumptions, you can respectfully clarify and end the friendship.

There could also be the slimmest chance that things could still work out, and hearing the other party out is the only way to find out.

Step 7: Set boundaries

Setting boundaries is the most crucial step for you because it certifies the breakup. If you break up with a friend, you can't return to the same level of intimacy you once shared.

You need to set boundaries with them. If necessary, you can unfollow them on social media. You may have to block the person if the relationship is toxic.

What not to do during a friendship breakup



- **No ghosting:** Ghosting a friend is uncool, and the silent treatment is, at best, the lamest thing to do – well, except you plan to make the person suffer. It is best to let them know where they went wrong and to give them a chance to tell their side of the story. Remember, ghosting is only acceptable when your friend refuses to take the hint and maintain boundaries.
- **Don't breach boundaries:** You need to maintain the set boundaries. Feelings of guilt can push you to breach boundaries, so at such times, go to your journal and remind yourself why the relationship had to end.
- **No feeling guilty:** Since we have started this conversation, it's just right to finish it. Don't feel guilty. Yes, the relationship was good, and you have great memories, but it had to end, so don't feel bad that it did.
- **Don't disrespect the person:** Don't become disrespectful and insulting, even if you think the person deserves it. Don't act like you never knew them if you saw them around. Be friendly without overstepping your boundaries.

- **No gossiping:** You most likely share the same friends or are in the same clique with them, but you shouldn't say trash about the other person to people – keep it civil. Dr Jane advises that, though you are no longer friends, you shouldn't ruin the person's reputation. Ending things with a friend doesn't automatically make them evil.

How to break up with a toxic friend



Toxic friendships are draining; sometimes, such friends don't even recognise how much harm they are causing. Therefore, you must know how to break up with a toxic friend.

When a friendship becomes toxic, the wisest thing to do is leave. Dr Jane explains that being around them can affect your mental health, "it affects how you see yourself. It affects your self-esteem and can push you to do destructive things to your health."

The best way to end a toxic friendship is to leave. Don't give excuses for their behaviour, and don't hold on to the relationship because it has lasted long. When you have tried your best to bring things to normalcy, and it fails, end it.

If talking to the person in person isn't dangerous, do so. But if it doesn't seem like a safe option, send a respectful text. With such friends, you might need to block them and avoid being in the same space, especially if they don't respect your request for a breakup.

The Gist

Breaking up with a friend can go wrong if you are not cautious. If it's a friendship you treasure, take extra steps to ensure the breakup doesn't cause ill feelings. And to do that, you must end the friendship civilly and respectfully.

Try not to end things over a text. If you're unsure if ending things over a text is a good idea, imagine how you would feel if the person in question ended the friendship over a text. In essence, consider the person's feelings as well.

Good luck as you try out the steps above.