

Friends

Task 1 Your friends

Complete this questionnaire about your friendships.

	You	Your partner
Who was your first friend and when did you meet?		
Do you prefer to have a couple of close friends or a big group of friends?		
Do you have any special friends?		
How often do you see them?		
How often do you speak to them?		
How do you keep in contact?		

Task 2 Friendship in the UK

Try to think of possible answers to these questions before you read.

- What's the most popular method of contact between school friends?
- Who sends the most text messages, adults or teenagers?
- What are the advantages of text messages for friendships?
- What is textitis?

Friends

Stand outside a school gate in the UK at 3.30pm most weekdays and you will see groups of teenagers, huddled over their mobile phones. It's more than six years since schools started banning phones because pupils were receiving calls during lessons. Now they don't just switch on their phone to call someone at the school gates. They are more likely to be using their thumb to send messages to friends who might even be just a few metres away. Sixty percent of all UK text messages are sent by teenagers.

Then they arrive home and rush to phone or text the friends they left on the bus two minutes ago. So is this a sign that teenagers are addicted to text? Or are they just addicted to contacting each other? Statistics show that eighty percent of 15 to 24 year olds conduct their social lives via SMS.

Some people think that keeping in touch with friends by text messaging has reached obsessive proportions. Other people believe that they are closer to their friends because they can have more frequent contact with them. Some friendships depend on the constant daily calls and text messages. One 14 year old sent 2,500 text messages in one month on his new mobile. When his dad got the phone bill he told newspapers that his son had a disease. This new disease is called textitis.

What do you think? Have you got textitis?

Task 3 Your country

Discuss these questions in pairs.

- Does any of the information in the text surprise you?
- Is any of the information similar to your own country?
- Do your parents send them?
- Do your parents phone or go to see their friends?
- Do you think adults use their mobiles more than teenagers?
- Do people use them too much?
- Are people obsessed with them?
- Make sentences about friendships at school or between students in your country.
- Make a sentence about the ways people use to contact each other.
- Compare adults and teenagers in your country. Do they have similar ways of communicating with friends?

Task 4 Reasonable or obsessive contact

What's the best way to contact friends after school?

- Go to see them
 - Phone them
 - Write to them
 - Send an SMS message to them
 - E-mail them
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- Which method of contact is the most personal?
 - Do you need to speak to friends every day?
 - Are UK teenagers different from you?
 - Why do you think the teenagers at the school gates have an urgent need to text their friends?
 - Do your parents control how often you see friends or contact them? How?

Task 5 Problem page

Read this letter from a teenage magazine in the UK.

- Who is writing the letter?
- What's her problem?
- What do you think of Gemma?
- What should Lucy do?
- Write a reply to her

Dear Barry,

Help! I was worried that I had no friends in September. We moved to Manchester and I missed my old mates in London. Then a girl in my class called Gemma invited me to her house after school. It was great at first and I started to feel more at home. We gossiped and did our homework together. It just got more and more intense. She wants to do every bit of homework with me.

I got a new mobile for Christmas and Gemma started to text me. She showed me how to do it. I thought she was brilliant. But now I hate it. She texts me every evening and sometimes there are 5 or 6 messages. If I don't answer she calls. She calls after nine. My parents are getting annoyed. I can't just have a quiet Saturday any more. She wants to either see me or texts me all day long. I just need a break. She's driving me mad but I don't want to lose her friendship. She's nice.

What should I say to her? I'm so worried, I lie awake at night thinking of the right words to tell her. I need more space.

Lucy 15
Manchester

Task 6 Quotations and lyrics

Look at these famous quotations on friends and friendship. Some of them are lyrics from pop songs.

'An honest answer is the sign of true friendship.' **Proverbs 21:26**

'A friend is someone who gives you total freedom to be yourself.' **Jim Morrison**

Lead singer of The Doors

'Friends have all things in common.' **Plato**

'I get by with a little help from my friends.' **John Lennon and Paul McCartney**

'Anybody can sympathise with the sufferings of a friend, but it requires a very fine nature to sympathise with a friend's success.' **Oscar Wilde**

- Do you agree with them?
- Which is your favourite?
- Do you have any similar sayings or quotations from writers in your country?
- Have you got any favourite songs about friendship?
- Do you know any lines or lyrics well?
- Make a poster or leaflet with English lyrics for everyone to keep. All the lyrics should say something about friends or friendships.

Task 7 A true friend

A recent survey in the UK asked 10,000 people about their friendships. The main findings were:

Most people will have about 360 friends in their whole life.
Only 6 of their friends will be called a 'true friend'.
Most people tell their innermost secrets to their 'true friends'.

- Write a definition of a true friend. A true friend is a person who...
- Read your definitions to the class.
- Do you all agree?

Task 8 Role play

You have just arrived home from school and a close friend from your class calls you on your mobile. Imagine the sorts of things you might talk about. Why is your friend phoning? Make notes.

Invent a typical after school conversation in pairs. Act out your conversation.