



## Friends With Benefits

How To Do Friends With Benefits (Without Seriously Ruining Everything)



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An awesome friend you can also have great sex with, but with no strings attached may sound like a perfect scenario. That's if you do it right, though.

Unfortunately, many people don't follow the rules — yes, there are rules — and that's where feelings get hurt and friendships (sexual and otherwise) end up destroyed.

"When I researched my book, *The Man Puzzle: A Guide to Understanding Men (Heart, Mind and Soul)* I personally interviewed thousands of men in small group settings; nearly a thousand women and more researchers than one can count," says author **Philip Petree**. "In a follow-up survey on sexual attitudes, when asked if men had participated in a friends with benefits relationship, the numbers were fairly evenly split. When asked if either partner ended up getting their feelings hurt, 70% said yes, they had. When asked if the person with hurt feelings wanted more from the relationship, 91% said yes. When asked if the relationship had navigated to permanent, only 6% said it had. When asked why the relationship ended, it was because one person was insistent on making the relationship permanent and the other didn't want it beyond where it was," Petree says.

If something sounds too good to be true, it often is, and your friends with benefits arrangement usually ends without the arrangement lasting — or the friend. "Friends with benefits sounds in theory like the best of both worlds, but usually ends up causing unwanted drama and hurt feelings," says Avi Kahan, co-founder of dating app InviteUp.

Although friends with benefits can work in the short term, it ultimately has an expiration date. "Either you transition to boyfriend or girlfriend or stop hooking up when one person feels emotionally unfulfilled. So the keys to successfully navigating a 'hookup' relationship are 1) Accepting that it's a short-term situation, and 2) Being honest with the other person and with yourself," says Kahan.

Of course, there are certain guidelines we can follow to make this sort of relationship — and don't for a second tell yourself it isn't a relationship — as drama-free as possible. Using your friend at your convenience and then tossing them aside when you find a better offer is not acceptable, no matter how casual your arrangement may be.

## Be Clear About The Rules

The best way to do friends with benefits better is to lay down the rules and groundwork right in the beginning — that way, both people have a sense of what to expect from the friends with benefits situation, says **Maria Akopyan**, a life and relationship coach. It helps to discuss the fact that once one or both people start developing feelings, the friends with benefits fun is over, as well as the fact that both are free to date others without any jealousy on either part.

"The most successful friends with benefits situations are where both people have their own separate lives, come together casually only for fun sexual trysts and leave it at that. No dates, gifts, **social media posts**, or anything that might suggest there is more than friendship and casual sex," says Akopyan. Communication is key so that both are always on the same page.

## Make Sure You're On The Same Page

And check in every so often to make sure the page hasn't turned for either one of you. Because it happens. A lot. "In the heat of the moment we may be tempted to say the right thing or agree to something we are not completely happy with just to, well, not spoil the fun," says **Lora Ivanova**, co-founder and chief marketing officer of myLAB Box, the first nationwide at-home STD testing service. "If your partner communicates a different expectation than yours, you have to be prepared to back off and seek your fun elsewhere," says Ivanova. If they are secretly wanting more, there will be trouble down the line. "Entering into a casual relationship with misaligned expectations is a sure recipe for disaster so be sure to start on the right footing," says Ivanova.

## Reciprocation Is A Must

This is a big one, possibly the biggest — your sex buddy does not exist to appear at your convenience for your pleasure. They are a human being with needs of their own. Remember that it's only friends with benefits if both are benefitting. "Reciprocate and take turns where you're going to meet up. Some people really tire of hearing 'Come to my place, I'm horny' every time [the other person] wants to have sex. Leave the option open, like, 'Hey, what are you doing tonight? My place or yours?'" says Bobbie Morgan, author of sex and relationship blog **A Good Woman's Dirty Mind**. And it doesn't end there — make sure that both of you are having just as much fun in the sack. Just because it's not a real "relationship" doesn't mean one person's sexual pleasure means more than the other's. Then, they're just steamrolling toward the obliteration of the friendship.

## Be Honest About Boundaries

If you don't want to know about their other activities and dates, be upfront about it. "Let each other know if there is someone that is going to change the situation. This is not a permanent situation, so remember to not get too used to this person being around," says Stef Safran, "Chicago's Introductionista," owner of **Stef and the City**, a matchmaking and dating expert in Chicago.

## Keep It Fun

Keep romance out of the fun — but don't keep the fun out of the relationship. Sounds counter-intuitive, doesn't it? "This is one other common pitfall of casual daters. The issue with romance is it creates expectations. It also can confuse your partner and make them think you want or are developing deeper feelings," says Ivanova. "On the flip side, you cannot skip intimacy completely and move on to sex; this is no fun. Focus on pleasing your partner, doing things you both enjoy, making them feel good, but skip the grand gestures, **elaborate dates** and weekend getaways. Save those for if and when you are ready to explore a deeper connection."

Also, try to avoid falling into routines. "Don't spend every Saturday night with someone or get too used to them being there at certain times," says Safran. "You aren't going to meet someone if you don't try, so don't get into a situation where you can mistake this person for something they are not."

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## Be Respectful

Even if this is just fun between friends, you are friends, and human beings with feelings and you should always consider your actions and their feelings. "Friends with benefits only works if the friend part stays at play. Casual relationship, like any relationship, requires a trust, empathy and communication," says Ivanova.