

how to make up with a friend

She said some ugly things, you said some ugly things, now nobody's saying anything. You could let this deep freeze settle in for good—or you could work things out and get your buddy back. Here's how.

Maybe she uttered the first angry word. Maybe you did. Either way, you and your good friend are on the outs. You miss her, but you're ticked off, still hurting—and stuck. You have no idea how to make things right. Fortunately, we've got just the right words to help you get out of this uncomfortable situation, and you can learn to use them. Really, you can.

STEP 1 Decide to make the first move.

If you're thinking, "Hey, I have my pride," and want to wait for *her* to call—well, that's just misguided, says Paulette Dale, Ph.D., author of *"Did You Say Something, Susan?": How Any Woman Can Gain Confidence With Assertive Communication*. "You don't have to admit you did anything wrong or

that you caused the argument," Dale points out. "All you're doing is taking the first step toward getting a valuable friendship back on track."

Sure, picking up that phone is a nerve-racking proposition, but would you rather have that big fight fester inside you for who knows how long? If you *still* can't get past your pride, challenge yourself to come up with at



"We haven't talked for three weeks
and I miss you."





3 things to say when she's too mad to hear you

"I understand."

This lets her know that you've put aside your own anger and hurt to imagine how *she* feels—and that you respect those feelings.

● **Example:** "I understand how annoyed you must have been."

"Thank you."

She'll be surprised when you thank her for saying why she's mad at you, but she'll appreciate it. You're showing you're grateful for any info that will help you end the fight.

● **Example:** "Thank you for telling me I butted in and gave you advice you didn't want. I see now that it wasn't at all helpful."

"I don't know what I was thinking."

Paradoxically, by humbly admitting that you really messed up (if you feel you did), you encourage her to meet you halfway. "Jeez," she may decide, "I'm no Ms. Perfection, either. Let's put this behind us and move on."

● **Example:** "I don't know what I was thinking when I teased you about your new haircut in front of someone nasty like Ginny—of all people! Please forgive me."

least one good reason why she may have acted as she did. It'll help you see that there are two sides to the story of your fight—which will make it easier for you to reach out.

STEP 2 Before you call, know what you want from the conversation.

Do you simply crave a chance to apologize for your part in the blowup? Or would you rather discuss what led to the fight? If you don't do this bit of prep work, you may (out of nervousness) just mumble something like, "Hi, what's new?" and pretend the problem never existed, says Holly Weeks, author of *Taking the Stress Out of Stressful Conversations*. But burying the conflict won't make it go away; over time, those bad feelings will continue to drive a wedge between you two.

STEP 3 Carefully choose your opening line.

Let her know from the get-go that you care about her and the friendship. Two suggested openers from Dale: "We haven't talked for three weeks and I miss you" or "Listen, I want you to know how upset I am that we had a disagreement. Our friendship means a lot to me."

STEP 4 Be prepared for the brush-off.

Unfortunately, her response could be an icy, "Sorry. This is a bad time for me to talk. Good-bye." Although that feels like a slap in the face, don't freak out. Remember, your call is probably catching her by surprise, says Dale, and she may be flooded with emotions at that moment. So give her time. Say good-bye graciously, and maybe in a day or a week, she'll soften and call you. If not, after a couple of weeks, consider writing her a follow-up note to basically reiterate the simple sentiment above. After that, leave any further overtures up to her.

STEP 5 Apologize for whatever you're sorry for.

Taking responsibility for your part says, "Let's meet halfway and solve this." Some examples:

● **If you really feel that you're in the right**, focus on the one thing you obviously do regret: "I'm sorry that we've gone so long without talking. It's been hard not to have you to discuss life with."

● **If you're sorry that you weren't very diplomatic during that last unpleasant encounter with your pal**, you might say to her, "Listen, I know that I was upset about X that day. I'm sensitive about that particular subject. I'm sorry that I didn't tell you more nicely that I was having trouble handling it," suggests Dale.

● **If you know that something you did or said really upset her**, tell her sincerely that you understand, that you regret uttering it, and that you didn't mean to be unkind, recommends Weeks. For instance, try this: "You know, I was wrong to say that your husband doesn't help you enough with chores. I said it without thinking when I saw how tired you were that day. I'm sorry."


STEP 6 Reinforce positive feelings you have about your friendship.

As in warm words like these: "I'm sorry that I snapped at you when you showed up late for lunch that day. The truth is, I really look forward to our get-togethers—they're the bright spot in my week." How can she be mad after hearing that?

STEP 7 Sign off with optimism.

"I'm so glad that we got this straightened out" or "It's great to be talking to you again" should do the trick. And smile as you say it—your friend *will* hear the difference.

After the call:

Call her again soon, just to chat about nothing. Enough with the awkward silence, you know? 

Could you use some help with a tough conversation?

Tell us about it. Send an e-mail to redbook@hearst.com (please type "Say Anything" in the subject field).