

The Rules of Friendship

This lesson helps students recognize the difference between cliques and friends. Students will work together to generate some “friendship rules” for their classroom that help make sure everyone is included.

Inclusiveness Sub-Concept(s)

Kindness

Project Timeframe

30-40 minutes

Required Materials

- ☐ “Friendship Group or Clique” worksheet - one printed for each group
- ☐ Poster board / markers for Rules of Inclusion

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



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AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.**
[See last page for details.](#)

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Recognize the difference between friendship groups and cliques.
- Develop a list of guidelines to draw from when confronted with clique behavior.
- Develop skills to build authentic friendships, include others, and stand up for people who are treating others unkindly.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Teamwork is an essential part of teaching. Look around - who is on your team? Are you a cohesive team or could you be more inclusive of others? What could you do to help bring people together more?

Tips for Diverse Learners

- If you know cliques are an issue in your class, be mindful of how you present this lesson. You do not want the students you know are routinely left out to feel singled out, spotlighted, or otherwise the subject of discussion. Tailor the set-up of this lesson to your class, acknowledging that it can be difficult to always feel included or make room for others - and that everyone at some point in their life will feel like they are being left out. Remind students, though, that the goal for your class is to make it a safe and inclusive space for all, and that everyone in the class has room to be kinder and more inclusive.
- Consider the group dynamics of your students when putting them into groups. Likely if you let them self-group, they will choose their friends or use “clique-like” thinking to form their groups. You may choose to let them do this and then have a discussion about how they formed their groups. Or, group students who do not typically work together, and let them potentially forge new relationships through this activity.



Share

3-5 minutes

Review the definition of **inclusiveness** - see if students can remember the definition from Lesson 1 if you have completed that lesson already: *Including others, inviting them in, and welcoming them with open arms.*

Now we are going to discuss the difference between a clique and a friendship group.

Ask:

- Do you know what a “clique” is? *According to the dictionary, a clique is “a small, exclusive group of people.”*
- How would you describe a friendship group?
- How is a friendship group different from a clique?

Highlight the fact that cliques often have someone who is a leader and who dominates the group dynamic. This person also usually makes rules for the group and excludes other people who do not seem to fit the group dynamic (often superficially - they don’t look the right way, wear the right clothes, or have the right things). Friendship groups, on the other hand, do not have a hierarchy. Everyone is included equally and people might come in and out of friendship groups, depending on the make-up of the group and what the group is doing. Cliques are more about status and popularity; friendship groups are more about socializing and building relationships.



Inspire

10-15 minutes

Friends or Clique?

Have students work in small groups to complete the Friendship Group or Clique worksheet. You will need to give one worksheet to each group. When the groups are done, return as a class and discuss their answers.

Teacher Note: Answers may vary among the groups, but Scenarios 1 and 2 represent cliques and Scenario 3 represents friendship behavior. When you bring the class back together to share their responses, also discuss what could be done to make Scenarios 1 and 2 more inclusive.



Empower

10-15 minutes

The Rules of Friendship

Now that you've explored behaviors that are more exclusive than inclusive, develop "Rules of Friendship" that will help the whole class act more like friends than cliques. Some rules might include.

- No saving seats.
- No one left out - If someone needs a partner during group work, invite them to join you.
- No social bragging - it's ok if you have special plans that do not include everyone, but do not brag about those plans to make others feel left out.

Write your rules on a large piece of paper that can be posted prominently in the classroom. Posting these by the door might be good, so that students are reminded as they go out into the more social spaces of the school (lunchroom, media center, commons, recess, lockers, etc.) to be authentic friends and not exclusive cliques.



Reflect

3-5 minutes

Ask:

- How do students feel these friendship rules will help them be more inclusive?
- Which friendship rule are they going to be mindful of and practice this week?

Explain that you will check back in a week - and you will be watching everyone - to see how well the class is following these rules.



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The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the [CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs](#).

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

Friendship Group or Clique?

Read the following scenarios and decide if it represents a friendship group or a clique. Underline the key ideas in the scenario that helped you make your decision.

Scenario 1: Lunchroom Vibes

A group of kids sits together every day at the same lunch table, creating an invisible "members-only" vibe. New students or others trying to join are subtly ignored or met with awkward silence, while the group continues to talk among themselves, sharing inside jokes and stories about their weekend plans.

1. **Decide:** Friendship Group or Clique? _____
2. Underline parts of the scenario that support your decision.

Scenario 2: Weekend Plans

On a Friday afternoon, a group of friends excitedly talk about a weekend hangout, sharing it loudly in class, naming each other and hyping up how fun it'll be. Someone nearby asks if they can join, but they dodge the question, mentioning it's "just a thing we already planned." Later, they post pictures online, tagging each other to show the event was an exclusive meet-up.

1. **Decide:** Friendship Group or Clique? _____
2. Underline parts of the scenario that support your decision.

Scenario 3: On the Playground

During recess, a group of friends plays a game they love, but when a few classmates watch from the sidelines, they call out, "Wanna join?" They explain the game rules, making it easy for everyone to jump in, switching up teams to make sure everyone gets a chance to play and feel part of the group.

1. **Decide:** Friendship Group or Clique? _____
2. Underline parts of the scenario that support your decision.