

How to Find the Best Person to Get Advice from on an Issue

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Everyone needs advice every once in a while, and sometimes it can be challenging to decide who to ask for it. The right answer for you will depend on the nature of your question, who you know, and who you are comfortable talking to. Think carefully about who to turn to for advice in order to get the guidance you need.

Method 1

Method 1 of 3: Asking Friends and Family for Advice



1 Ask someone you trust. No matter what you need advice on, you should start by asking someone who you trust to give you sound advice.^[1] If the topic is sensitive, be sure to only ask for advice from people you know will not spread gossip.

- You should also make sure the person feels comfortable giving advice. Start with a very general description of your issue by saying something like, "Would you mind offering me some advice about how to choose a college major?" or, "I know you and your boyfriend have a great relationship. Do you think you could give me some advice about a problem I'm having in my relationship?"



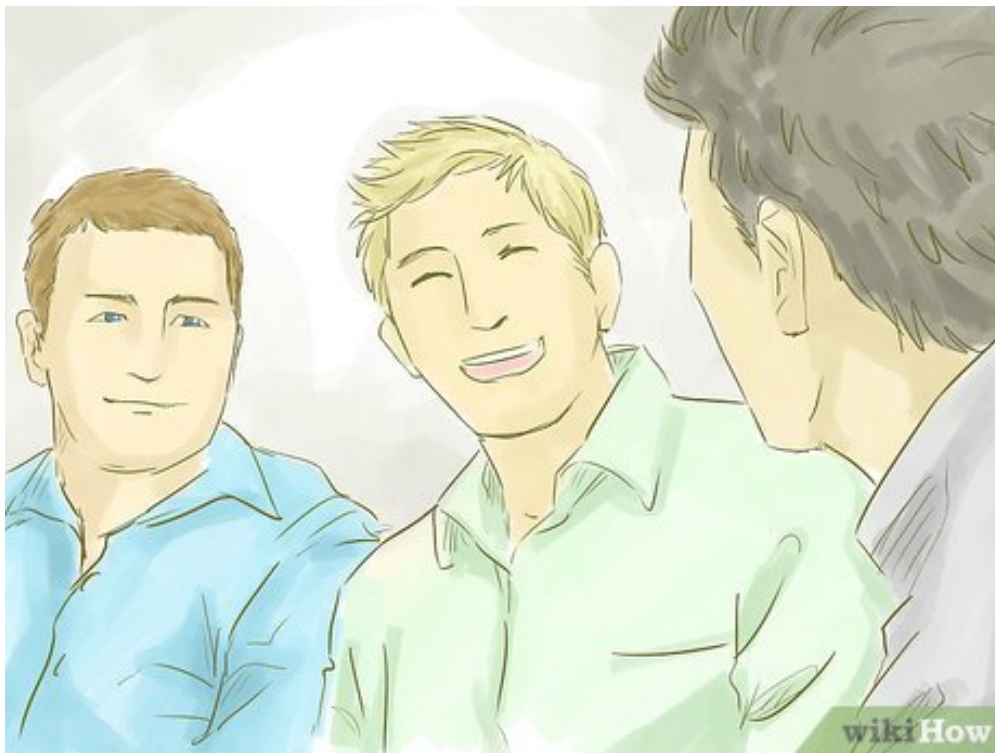
2 Think about experience. The level of experience necessary will depend on the topic you need advice about. Typically, you should seek out a friend or loved one who has handled experiences like the one you are dealing with in a way that you find admirable.^[2] For example, if you need advice about finding a job, it will probably be more helpful to ask someone who has recently been successful in finding a job.

- If the person has special knowledge about the topic, that can be good or bad. Take into account whether that knowledge might prevent them from giving you the objective advice you need.^[3]



3 Consider biases. Everyone has biases, and this is not always a bad thing, but it is important to keep in mind the experiences that your friends and family members have had before you ask them for advice. For example, your friend who is recently divorced is likely to offer more cynical advice about relationships than your friend who just met the man of her dreams.

- Consider the person's morals and social norms, as well—are they similar to or different from yours? How might that affect their advice?[4]
- Make sure that the issue won't somehow offend the person you are asking help from with. For example, if you are having a parenting issue, try to refrain from asking someone who just suffered the loss of a child for help.
- Don't limit yourself to asking for advice from like-minded people. It can sometimes be eye-opening to learn from people at completely different stages in their lives or in different career fields.[5]



4 Ask more than one person for advice. If you feel like you would benefit from multiple perspectives, feel free to ask multiple people for their opinions before making a final decision. Once you're finished talking to a friend or family member, ask if he or she knows of anyone else who may be able to help you with your issue.

- Keep in mind that the more people you ask, the more diverse opinions you are likely to hear. This can make it more difficult to make a decision, so don't feel like you need to ask everyone you know for advice.^[6]
- For lighthearted advice, you can create a poll on social media to gather all your friends' opinions.



5 Express Gratitude. Be sure to thank your friends and family members for their time, and let them know that you will be there for them if they ever need advice as well.

- Even if you didn't find the advice helpful, show loved ones that you appreciate their input by saying something such as, "Thanks for sharing your opinion with me" or, "I hadn't considered that before. Thanks for the advice."

Method
2

Method 2 of 3: Asking a Professional for Advice



1 Take advantage of free resources. There are lots of free resources available if you just know where to look. For example, if you are a college student (or even an alumnus), you probably have access to free career services. If you belong to a gym, you might have access to a free personal trainer who can answer your fitness questions. You can also look for public events like career fairs.



2 Use your network. If you need career advice, try to find someone who has worked in your field for a long time and will be able to share his or her experiences. For students, teachers can be an invaluable resource, even if you don't have a class with them.

- If you can't think of anyone to talk to, try connecting with people on LinkedIn or asking friends, family members, or teachers to connect you with their contacts.
- If possible, join a club or organization for people in your industry. This will give you access to industry news and help you make connections with people who might be able to offer you career advice.
- If someone you don't know is taking the time to offer you free advice, be sure to respect his or her time. Come prepared with questions, take notes, be flexible about meeting time and place, and thoroughly express your gratitude. Be careful not to ask too much of this person.^[7]



3 Don't be afraid to ask. Plenty of professionals are happy to give some complementary advice. If you need advice on what kind of tablet to get your boyfriend for his birthday, for example, you shouldn't hesitate to ask someone who works at an electronics store for his or her opinion. If you have a legal or tax problem, many professionals offer free consultations, which may help you decide if you need to hire someone.



4 Respect personal and professional boundaries. Sometime people are just not comfortable offering professional advice to friends and family, and sometimes there are legal or ethical reasons why they cannot. If you have friends who are doctors or lawyers, for example, it's perfectly fine to ask them for advice, but be sure to ask them if they are okay with it first.^[8]

- Approach the situation delicately, and let your friends know that you won't be offended if they can't offer you advice by saying something like, "I don't want to put you in an uncomfortable situation, but are you able to offer me some advice on a legal issue I'm having?"



5 Consider paying for professional advice. For some kinds of advice, it may be best to pay for an experienced professional to really walk you through your options. This can be helpful for many kinds of advice, from financial planning to career counseling to psychiatric counseling.

- Make sure to consider any biases the individual you are hiring may have. If he or she is affiliated with a company or organization, make sure you understand the relationship. For financial advisers, ask whether their compensation is tied to the products they sell. You can still get useful advice from professionals who aren't 100% bias-free, but it is helpful to understand where they are coming from.^[9]

Method 3 of 3: Seeking Anonymous Advice



1 Post on general online question answering sites. Before you do this, make sure your topic is appropriate. Some topics, such as advice on what color to paint your room, lend themselves nicely to multiple anonymous comments. Other topics may not be as appropriate.

- Make sure you're ready for a barrage of anonymous comments before you post anything online. If the topic is so sensitive that you might get easily offended by advice you don't agree with, or if you think hearing multiple conflicting opinions will just confuse you further, you may want to reconsider posting online.
- Topics that require an extensive amount of background knowledge about your life may not work well on these kinds of sites.
- Take anonymous online advice with a grain of salt. You may get some great advice from a really thoughtful user, or you may not. It's perfectly fine to disregard advice you don't agree with, especially when you don't know anything about the person giving it to you.



2 Find a good specialty forum. This may not be possible for all topics, but if you find an appropriate one, you're likely to encounter a community of people who have an interest in the topic that you need advice about. If, for example, you want advice on how to eat a healthy diet or how to raise your children, you are likely to find lots of forums with very active users.

- To identify a good site, read through past posts and make sure the majority of the questions get reasonable responses. Also, check to make sure that the question you want to ask fits with the theme of the questions other people are asking.
- You may also be able to find sites that offer free advice from professionals in industries such as medicine and the law. Be sure to do your research to make sure the site is legitimate.



3 Use hotlines for serious issues. If you are dealing with a serious issue like mental illness, grief, or domestic violence, and you need someone to talk to, there are a variety of free crisis hotlines available. Calling a hotline will provide you with the benefit of speaking anonymously to people who are highly knowledgeable about the specific problem you are dealing with. They vary by specialty and geographic region, but a quick search should reveal what's available for you.[10]



Expert Q&A

Question

Should I ask friends for advice?



Kirsten Thompson, MD

Board Certified

Psychiatrist

Expert Answer

Only if you feel like they have your best interests in mind! Always confide in people who will be honest and open with you.

Helpful ☐ 0 Not Helpful ☐ 0

Question

Who do you ask for professional advice?



Kirsten Thompson, MD

Board Certified

Psychiatrist

Expert Answer

Chat with someone who understands the nuances of your situation. This way, they can give you advice based on what they've learned in the past.

Helpful ☐ 0 Not Helpful ☐ 0



Tips

- Call up or email a friend or family member if they live far away. Good advice is worth it if you think they are capable of giving it to you.

- Don't be shy about reaching out to someone you haven't seen in a long time, such as a former professor. Simply remind the person about who you are and ask if he or she would mind sharing some wisdom with you.
- Think about whether you are really asking for advice, or just asking for someone to agree with what you are saying. If you want true advice, make sure you frame your questions in a way that invites an honest response.[11]

References

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About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Kirsten Thompson, MD**. Dr. Kirsten Thompson is a Board Certified Psychiatrist, Clinical Instructor at UCLA, and the Founder of Remedy Psychiatry. She specializes in helping patients with mental health conditions such as major depressive disorder, anxiety, ADHD, bipolar disorder, OCD, PTSD, and postpartum depression. Dr. Thompson holds a BS in Operations Research Industrial Engineering from Cornell University and an MD from The State University of New York, Downstate College of Medicine. This article has been viewed 26,586 times.

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