

# How to Ask for Help

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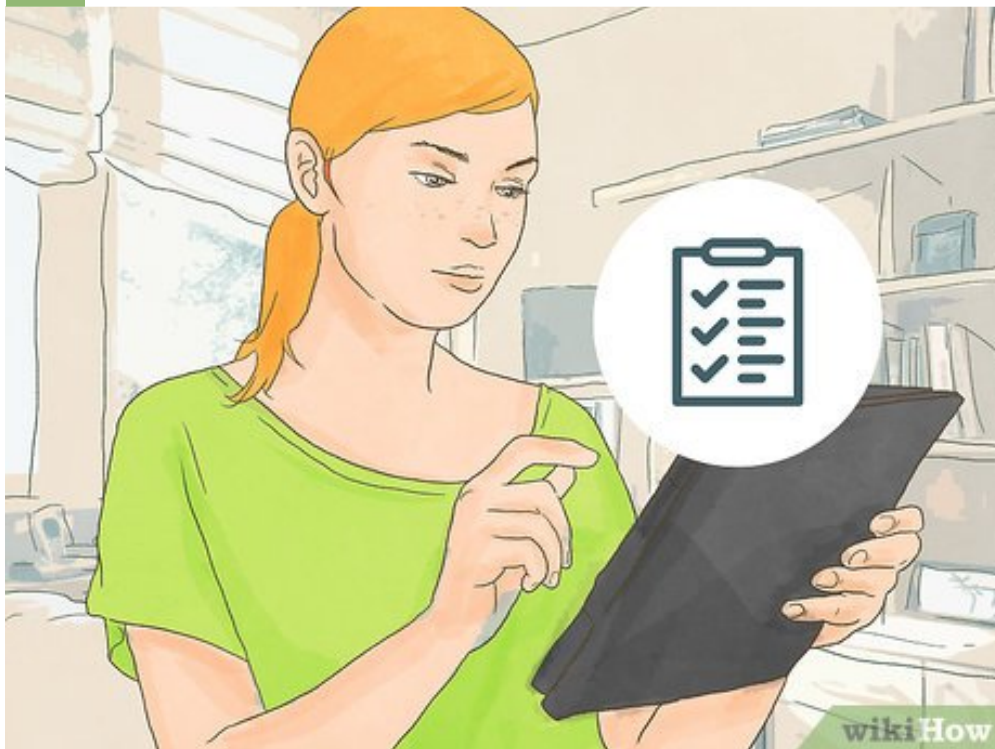
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Maybe you're a new parent overwhelmed by keeping the house in order. Or maybe you're a student struggling with a tough homework assignment. Everyone has been in a situation where they could use some help. Unfortunately, it can feel tough to ask for help. Maybe you feel embarrassed or scared that you'll be turned down. Don't worry! Once you figure out what you need, you can make a polite and organized request. Chances are someone will be happy to give you the help you need!

## Method 1

### Method 1 of 3: Figuring Out What Kind of Help You Need



**1 Make a list of what you need.** It's normal to feel overwhelmed in general and just want some help. However, you'll be better prepared to ask for help if you can clearly articulate your needs. For example, maybe you've recently had surgery and need a lot of help just getting things done. Your list might look like this:<sup>[1]</sup>

- Go to the grocery store
- Take the kids to dentist appointments
- Walk the dog
- Help with depression



**2 Rate the importance of each need.** Assign a number from 1-10 to each need. A 10 means that this task is essential, a 1 means that it is not that important. This will help you figure out your most pressing needs. You can start with getting help for those, and then work your way down the list. For example, it's normal to struggle with depression after a surgery. That would be rated a 10, since it can impact your ability to take care of other needs.



**3 Write down a list of people who could help you.** While it might seem daunting to ask for help, remember that there are likely plenty of people in your life who will be more than happy to help you. Start with family and close friends and then think about other parts of your network. Your list might include:<sup>[2]</sup>

- Your partner
- Your siblings
- Your children
- Your best friend
- Your neighbors



**4 Match each person with one specific need.** Now it is time to compare your lists. Choose which person to ask for help with each task. Maybe your sister is a therapist. Ask her for some ideas about how to cope with depression. If your kids are old enough, they can walk the dog. Ask your partner to take a break from work to make sure the kids get to the dentist. Ask your neighbor if they would mind picking up a few things at the grocery store the next time they make a run. Choose people based on their abilities and their relationship to you.<sup>[3]</sup>

- This is called delegating tasks. Delegating tasks to people you trust can help you reduce stress, especially in times when you need extra help.



**5 Recognize that it is healthy and smart to ask for help.** It is important to remember that it is not weak to ask for help. In fact, it shows that you are strong enough to voice your own needs. You won't be able to do much good for others if you don't ask for the help you need. It's also smart to ask for help. If you don't, you might find your situation worsening instead of getting better.<sup>[4]</sup>



## Method 2 of 3: Making Your Request



**1 Choose the right time.** Don't ask someone for help when they are obviously busy or distracted. For example, don't ask your professor for help with homework right as they are trying to start class. Similarly, don't ask your boss for advice as they are rushing out the door.<sup>[5]</sup>

- If you're not sure whether or not it is a good time, just ask. You can say, "I'd love to ask for your help with something. Is there a time that's good for you to talk?"



**2 Speak up.** In most cases, if you don't ask for help you won't receive it. Sometimes people might be hesitant to step up and offer help. If you need something, speak up and ask.<sup>[6]</sup>

- Maybe you're traveling alone in a new city. If you're lost, ask for directions. Stop into a nearby store, or ask the bus driver which stop you need.
- You may feel vulnerable speaking up for help, but a certain degree of vulnerability can help you find the help you need. Don't feel weak, insecure, or embarrassed by asking for help.



- 3 Be specific.** People aren't mind readers. Instead of just saying, "I need help," clearly state precisely what it is that you need. For example, instead of saying to your teacher, "I'm confused. Can you help me?", say, "I don't understand how to solve the equation for X. Can you please show me a sample problem?"<sup>[7]</sup>
- Instead of saying to your partner, "I need you to help more around the house," you may say, "Could you please take the trash out and also do a load of laundry, please?"



**4 Frame the request in a positive way.** Sometimes it's tempting to whine a little bit. This could be a defense mechanism if you feel uncomfortable asking for help. It will help if you ask in a positive way instead.<sup>[8]</sup>

- Don't tell your co-worker, "I'm so swamped! Could you cover for me at the meeting this afternoon?" That might imply that you're busy, but you don't think your co-worker is. Instead, say, "I know we're both busy, but you seem to be handling the stress better than me. Do you have time to take my place at the meeting this afternoon so that I can get caught up?"





**5 Don't be self-deprecating.** No one wants to hear you put yourself down. Try not to talk negatively about yourself when asking for help. Instead, act confident. You'll be more likely to receive the help you need.

- Try not to say things like, "I'm so stupid. I'll never get Algebra. Can you help me again?" Instead, say, "This is complicated, but I know I can do it. Would you mind showing me another sample problem?"



**6 Be persistent.** Sometimes the help you receive might not turn out the way you expected. That can be frustrating. However, it is important not to give up. Keep trying to get help and make it work for you.<sup>[9]</sup>

- Maybe you just had your first mentoring session with your boss. You might feel like you didn't receive the sort of helpful advice that you were hoping for. Instead of canceling your next meeting, try again. Prepare a list of specific questions that you have for them.
- If you asked someone for help and they didn't come through, don't be afraid to ask someone else. Sometimes, you may need to reach out to a few people before getting assistance.



**7 Gain credibility by helping others.** People will be more likely to agree to help you if you have been known to help others. Build a reputation as a helpful person. If you see a co-worker who has too much on their plate, offer your assistance. They'll likely return the favor when you find yourself frazzled.<sup>[10]</sup>

- If your friend is sick, offer to drop off some food for them. You'll likely receive the same kind treatment when you find yourself in a bind.

### Method 3 of 3: Accepting Help Graciously



- 1 Acknowledge the help you received.** Even though you might feel embarrassed that you needed help, don't pretend like it never happened. Directly acknowledge that you appreciate what the other person did for you. Try to make this acknowledgment shortly after receiving help.<sup>[11]</sup>
  - If your professor stayed after class to go over your paper with you, say, "Thanks for staying. I appreciate your time."
  - Maybe your teen did some extra chores around the house when you were working late. Say, "That was really helpful of you to get dinner started."





**2 Be sincere.** When someone is helping you, it's okay to be a little bit vulnerable. The other person might appreciate knowing that they are genuinely helping you. For example, you could say, "Wow, thanks for watching the kids this evening. We really needed a date night!" Showing that your need was genuine is a good way to be sincere.



**3 Explain how they helped you.** Be specific when you thank someone. Let them know exactly what they did for you. You could say to your therapist, "Thanks for this session. I think you've given me some good tools to start overcoming my anxiety."<sup>[12]</sup>

- You could tell your partner, "Thanks for making dinner tonight. It meant a lot to me to be able to just put my feet up after a long day at work."



**Expert Q&A**

### Question

#### How do I ask for help as a single mother?



**Crisis Text Line**

24/7 Crisis Counseling

Expert Answer

Asking for help can be a tough thing to do in any situation. As a single mother, it is likely that you have an overwhelming amount on your plate and feeling a great deal of stress. If you have family who is supportive, consider asking them for help with small tasks, being there to listen if you are feeling stressed, or even for help to take a few hours to yourself—you deserve it. Take advantage of the support of your community, depending on what resources they may offer such as childcare, or assistance with food, for example. Remember to give yourself credit where credit is due—you are doing your best. Take what time you can to take care of yourself, too.

Helpful ☐ 0 Not Helpful ☐ 0

### Question

#### Where do I seek help?



**Crisis Text Line**

24/7 Crisis Counseling

Expert Answer

Look to your family and community for help. If you have family who is supportive, consider asking them for help with small tasks, being there to listen if you are feeling stressed, or even for help to take a few hours to yourself. Take advantage of the support of your community, too. For example, they may offer resources such as childcare or assistance with food. Remember that it's okay to ask for help, and give yourself credit where credit is due. You are doing your best.

Helpful ☐ 0 Not Helpful ☐ 0

### Question

#### I'm afraid that the only person I can ask for help will make fun of me. What can I do?



**Paul Chernyak, LPC**

Licensed Professional Counselor

Expert Answer

Most people aren't as critical as we perceive them to be. Asking for help requires taking a risk sometimes. If this person criticizes you, then you should consider having a secondary source to ask for help as a backup.

Helpful ☐ 14 Not Helpful ☐ 1

### Question

#### I need to find local help downsizing my lifestyle and performing chores and errands. What can I do to get help?



**Paul Chernyak, LPC**

Licensed Professional Counselor

Expert Answer

First, figure out specifically what kinds of things you need help with so that you can begin to search for organizations and people in your town that can help. Don't be afraid to ask for help in brainstorming this list as well.

Helpful ☐ 11 Not Helpful ☐ 1

#### Question

**What if I'm worried about the fact it may crush a friendship since they have built up the one asking for help and do not want to seem incapable?**



Community Answer

Any true friends won't judge you for being unsure. Don't care what others think. If you need help, you need help. There's nothing wrong with that.

Helpful 31 Not Helpful 5

#### Question

**How do I ask for help as a single mother?**



Community Answer

Follow the instructions listed in the article above.

Helpful 7 Not Helpful 10

#### Question

**I want to know if aid can be given to an individual who finds himself in a financial crisis? Be it a debtor and is unable to repay his creditors? I ask this because I am in this condition now and I am looking for assistance. What can I do?**



Community Answer

Many communities have organizations that will help individuals in financial crisis. Often times these are ngo's (non-government organizations) or are church based. Often times these groups will direct you to programs that will help with one area of your financial problem, such as assistance with your heating bill or classes in money management. You can do an internet search for "financial assistance" + your city and state. You will more than likely be directed to groups such as Volunteers of America, Salvation Army, and Catholic Community Services. Once you find one such group in your area, they will be able to help you find other groups nearby.

Helpful 16 Not Helpful 5

#### Question

**How can I ask for help if I think the person will be very angry?**



Community Answer

Remain calm, and be sure to explain your situation thoroughly.

Helpful 22 Not Helpful 6

#### Question

**How do I ask for help in class?**



Community Answer

Raise your hand! Ask a friend. Ask a teacher. You could also ask your guidance counselor or a paraprofessional.

Helpful 11 Not Helpful 4

### Question

**How can I ask for help again, when this person has helped me more than once before?**



Community Answer

If she's nice and kind, then she probably won't mind helping you more than once. Express how grateful you are and ask if there's anything you can do for her in return.

Helpful 13 Not Helpful 4

[See more answers](#)



### Tips

- It's okay to ask for help. Everyone needs help at some point.
- Make sure to say thank you.
- You could even send your helper a gift or a card to express your gratitude.

### References

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## About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Laurel Schwartz, MSW**. Laurel Schwartz is a Crisis Counselor for Crisis Text Line, a nonprofit that has exchanged over 100 million messages with people in crisis around the US. Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7 crisis support via text, and those in crisis can text 741741 to be connected with a trained Crisis Counselor. Laurel received her Master of Social Work from Columbia University in 2019. This article has been viewed 258,887 times.

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<https://www.wikihow.com/Ask-for-Help>

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