

The Buddy System

Sex between friends can be incredible—but nothing comes without a price.

The one time I started hooking up with a friend, it was awesome. At first. Chris and I were old high school buds who slept together every other week or so. We had a blast hanging out, and the sex was amazing. Naturally, I thought we were dating—until he told me he'd met someone. "You guys are going to love each other!" he said. Then he dragged me lingerie shopping for her because, well, that's what friends did. I picked out a frilly yellow bra and panty set for his new love, pretending to be thrilled. Really, I was mortified.

Despite the dangers, casual sex between good friends is hardly a new phenomenon. Over the past few years, however, the trend of "friends with benefits"—acquaintances who have sex occasionally, without any romantic feelings attached—has been on the rise. A recent MSN survey of over 19,000 men and women revealed that 64 percent said they had a fuck buddy. And really, why shouldn't they? Having an FWB means you get to have all the sex you want with someone you like and trust without the hassle of crappy relationship duties, like going on family trips to Colonial Williamsburg or helping her bury her dead cat.

But perfect as they may seem at the outset, these friendly arrangements are rife with potential land mines. After all, it's tough for two people who actually like each other to have a sexual relationship without one of them (OK, probably her) eventually becoming confused about where things stand. Simply put, staying friends while reaping the benefits is tough to pull off. If you're going to risk it anyway, there are a few cardinal rules to navigating these treacherous waters, gathered directly from women who've been there.

1. Timing Is Everything

When looking for an FWB, avoid the girl who's been single for a long time or one you suspect hasn't had casual sex in a while—odds are she'll rapidly morph into a stage-four clinger. That's



"Pull up a chair, SportsCenter is on!"

why girls who are fresh out of a relationship are ripe for the choosing. They're used to getting regular sex, and ideally, if they were the dumpers, they're not going to want to deal with relationship duties, either. "The best friend-sex I had was right after I broke up with a long-term boyfriend," says Karina, 30. "The last thing I wanted at that point was to have to call someone to check in or do anything relationship-y. I had a friend I'd always thought was hot, and one night at a bar we just kept inching closer and closer as we talked. Finally, he touched me, and after a few minutes we were furiously making out. It was pure lust."

And while plenty of people might assume hooking up with a longtime platonic friend could be uncomfortable, Karina says it was just

the opposite: "It was way better than the average first-time encounter because I knew for sure he wasn't a weirdo, so we could get straight to business. But the best part was that we had talked about sex during our friendship—our likes and dislikes—so we each knew exactly which buttons to push."

2. Keep It Secret

Be discreet. No friend with benefits wants her other friends—the benefitless ones—knowing about your little arrangement. "Everything was great with my fuck buddy situation until he showed up for our college friends' regular Friday happy hour gathering and passed a rolled-up pair of pantyhose to me at the table," says Cara, 25. "It might have even gone unnoticed >>>

had he not said, 'You left these last night,' while he did it. The circle of jaws hitting the table—including mine—is an image that's burned in my brain forever. My best girlfriend said it was 'like finding out your brother and sister were screwing.' Needless to say, he and I were in a bit of a fight for the next, oh, year or so. Idiot."

You might think it's OK to talk openly about a relationship that's not serious—after all, no one's feelings are at stake—but an overactive gossip mill actually kills a big part of the allure: having a dirty little secret. Karina says she liked being out with her FWB in a group setting because it turned her on to know they were going to hook up later that night—and that everyone else was clueless. "We'd barely even talk to each other all night so no one would suspect, which only built up the sexual tension," she says. "We'd leave separately, then go around the block and meet up before going to my apartment." Still, the web of lies can become difficult to maintain, especially for gossipy girls. But if you want to keep a good thing going, it's better to let her do the slipping up.

3. Keep the Sex Dirty

A girl who's willing to have sex with you but isn't willing to take long strolls through the park while holding hands is a gift unparalleled. So don't mess it up with romance. "The first



"I think our friendship would benefit from having dirty monkey sex."

couple of times my FWB and I had sex, we were animals—he threw me up against walls, pulled my hair, and once literally ripped my shirt off," says Gianna, 28. "Then, the third time, he lit candles and busted out some lavender-scented massage oil. He said he wanted to pamper me with a back rub first. I was mystified. I had gone there to get laid, not take part in a Calgon commercial. It was all too touchy-feely, and it freaked me out."

Of course, women sometimes prefer making love to straight screwing, but that's not the case when it comes to friends-with-benefits arrangements. Most girls will get dirtier with someone they know and trust—especially if they don't have to discuss the bills with him over Raisin Bran the next day. "I have the best

dirty sex with a friend who lives in another state," says Zoe, 27. "Half of our relationship is filthy texting and phone sex. I tell him how horny I am, he tells me how hard he wants to fuck me, and we never worry about taking it too far, because we rarely have to look each other in the eye when it's over. Then we screw when he comes to town." She says they enjoy the comfort of having known each other for over eight years, but they've never wanted to become a couple. Instead, they prefer to keep things strictly raunchy. "Dating would ruin what we have," she says. "I might think twice about telling him I want it in the ass if I had to go to brunch with his parents in the morning or if we'd just had a fight about whose tum it was to take out the garbage."





4. Be a Dick

When you're dealing with a fuck buddy, throw out everything you've learned about how to treat a woman once you've had sex with her. "The only way to pull this off successfully is to be a bit cold about it," says Kelly, 28. "It should be fun, but not too intimate; otherwise you start blurring the lines." Nina, 26, agrees: "There should be no cuddling. Even lying in bed talking afterward leaves room for feelings. The best thing for both parties to do is get up and bolt right after sex." The reality is, if a guy sticks around and spoons us after we come, we're probably going to enjoy that just as much as the sex—even if we know you're not the one for us. Part of the reason may even be biological. "An orgasm for women causes bonding and attachment, and that can make our reactions to people change over time," says Logan Levkoff, sexologist and author of *Third Base Ain't What It Used to Be*. "We learn to find things attractive in people that we couldn't see right off the bat."

That means the warmer you are after sex, the more likely it is your friend with benefits will start to view you as potential boyfriend material—even if she looks like Princess Grace and you look like Prince Andrew. Also on the "don't" list: playing with her hair, gazing deep into her eyes, and lavishing her with compliments. "When my FWB began telling me how hot I looked or asking what perfume I was wearing, I started wondering what the hell we were actually doing," says Karina. "It had been clear-cut until then."

State of the Union

Do you have a friend with benefits or a girlfriend? Compare the total number of checks in each column to find out.

	FWB	GF
1. Nights you spend together to nights you have sex:	<input type="radio"/> 1:1	<input type="radio"/> 3:1
2. She calls you: 	<input type="radio"/> Only after 3 A.M.	<input type="radio"/> 11 times a day
3. For your birthday she gave you:	<input type="radio"/> Crabs	<input type="radio"/> Framed photo of herself
4. Her instructions:	<input type="radio"/> Fuck me harder!	<input type="radio"/> Hold me tighter! 
5. At your place, she left a: 	<input type="radio"/> Balled-up thong	<input type="radio"/> Box of tampons, case of daddy issues
6. You know her friends: 	<input type="radio"/> Exist	<input type="radio"/> Can't stand you
7. When she says "pussy," she's referring to:	<input type="radio"/> Her anatomy	<input type="radio"/> Mr. Whiskers
8. When you talk to other women, she:	<input type="radio"/> Doesn't notice	<input type="radio"/> Starts shaking uncontrollably
TOTALS:	<input type="radio"/> Congratulations! You're having stress-free sex!	<input type="radio"/> Sorry, but it's time to have "the Talk."

5. Limit Interaction

Even if the girl you're screwing is a friend, it's important not to hang out with her too much if you want the sex to continue without confusion. Especially beware of activities that take place during the day, because they could be construed as standard dating territory. "I was in an FWB situation with this guy I really enjoyed sleeping with," says Erica, 25. "Then one day I helped him shop for curtains and paint and assumed we were turning a corner because we were doing errands together. But he still only called for sex. I ended up getting hurt."

In fact, even when it comes to sex, it shouldn't be too frequent, or regularly scheduled. "When my FWB started calling every day to see if I wanted to hook up later, I realized it was turning into something weird," says Lily, 30. "I knew if I kept sleeping with him, I'd have no chance of finding someone I wanted to date and sleep with, so I called it off." Sarah, 27, says she had one fuck buddy whose etiquette was textbook: "He only communicated with me by text, and only after midnight. It was pretty irregular and infrequent. I could see him twice in one week, then not again for three weeks. It was obvious he only wanted one thing from me, and I was fine with that."

THIS GUY HAS SEEN ME NAKED, YET HE'S NOT MY BOYFRIEND.

If you need a strict guideline, nearly all the women I spoke with said not to meet a buddy for sex more than twice a month. But the bottom line is this: Be aware of the differences between real relationships and FWB setups. As Cara puts it, "If you're friends and you hang out constantly and you're also having sex, what's the difference between that and being in a relationship besides an asterisk and fine print that says, 'No jealousy. Seriously.?'"

6. Prepare to Lose a Buddy

No matter how fun they can be, friends-with-benefits situations tend to get sticky—and if things end badly, you're losing more than a casual fling. "Sex changes every relationship," notes Levkoff. "And one person almost always ends up more involved. So there's no way to sal-

vage a friendship immediately once it ends." Levkoff says it's helpful to be honest about your intentions early on. But both parties still must be willing to accept the fallout. Zoe says the worst part about her sex-buddy-gone-wrong is that they were truly best friends—even remaining friends after they stopped having sex. "But his new girlfriend knows we used to sleep together, so she hates me, which means we can't still be friends. I miss him."

In other situations, the sex itself can eventually result in awkwardness. Karina says she sometimes wishes she and her FWB had just remained pals. Why? "Every time we see each other, I think about the fact that we've seen each other naked. It's like, here's this guy who's seen me with my legs over my head, yet he's not my boyfriend and we're just casually downing a beer together. There's something a little bit weird about that."

The general consensus from my research seems to be that, while they can be short-term fun, friendly hookups rarely work out in the long run. Still, don't let that discourage you from trying. Just don't forget to follow the rules. Oh, and wear a condom. God only knows how many other friends your secret sex buddy has been banging.

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