How to Fit In

Throughout your life, you will probably need to join new groups. Your goals might lead you to a new school or a new job. You might marry into a new family. At these times, you will be a newcomer. Being a newcomer to a group can be uncomfortable. You might feel awkward and unsure what to do or say. You might feel anxious because you said or did the wrong thing. A few practical steps can help you be a comfortable, confident group member.

1. First, learn all you can about the group. You can learn about many companies and schools online. When you are with the group, take time to watch how things work. Think about who the leaders are. At a job, figure out who the boss listens to. Notice each person's role in the group.

2. The next step to fitting in is to be reliable and hard-working. Show up when you are supposed to. Do the things that you said you would do. Then people will start to trust you. If you work hard and take on challenging tasks, people will see that you are a valuable part of the group. They will respect you.

3. Ask for help. As a new group member, you have a lot to learn. Asking for help shows that you respect other members' knowledge and experience. Don't expect to take control of the group. Instead, find your place in the group. This helps others get to know you better.

   When you do ask for help, start small. It's OK to ask for information or opinions. But be careful about asking for too much. Asking for too much can make other members of the group unhappy and unwilling to help.

Once you feel a part of the group, be sure to help the next new person. Being able to help a newcomer is a sure sign you have been successful.

1. What problem does this article discuss?
   a. Change can make you feel awkward.
   b. Some group members don't like new people.
   c. It can be uncomfortable to join a new group.

2. Why should you work hard when trying to fit in?
   a. You can figure out who is the leader of the group.
   b. You will earn respect from other group members.
   c. You will be able to ask other people for big favors later.

3. Which sentence from paragraph 1 tells the main idea of the article?
   a. Throughout your life, you will probably need to join new groups.
   b. Your goals might lead you to a new school or a new job.
   c. A few practical steps can help you be a comfortable, confident group member.

4. According to the article, what is one way to get a group member to trust you?
   a. Find out who the boss listens to.
   b. Show up when you are supposed to.
   c. Help other newcomers fit into the group.
Country Schools

1 In the 1800s, thousands of public schools were built in the United States. Schools built in rural or farming areas were called “country schools.” Compared with today’s students, kids who went to country schools faced difficulty and discomfort.

2 Unlike schools today, country schools were small, one-room buildings. They were cold in the winter and hot in the summer. In spring and fall, school was closed. The students stayed home to help their families with farming. Most children had to walk 2 to 3 miles to get to school. A few would ride horses, but there were no buses or cars like today.

3 Students at country schools had few supplies. Most schools had a blackboard made of slate, a black stone, at the front. Children had smaller slates for writing their lessons. Most children brought books from home, and books were passed from student to student until they wore out.

4 Drinking water was kept in a shared pail with a shared cup. This meant if one child got sick, the other students were likely to get sick, too. There were no restrooms or running water inside the school. Students went to the bathroom in an outhouse outdoors.

5 Country schools usually had from 6 to 40 students. Unlike today’s schools, in country schools children of all ages and grades were in the same room together. Students studied reading, math, and handwriting. The teacher worked with a few students at a time. Other students had to sit quietly memorizing lessons.

6 Many school teachers in the past were stern. Students were punished if they broke rules. Sometimes students had to stay after school. Other times, students were spanked or hit with a ruler.

7 At noon, children had an hour for lunch and recess. They brought lunch from home, including things like fruit and cheese, buttered bread, or sausage with potatoes. In summer, they could swim or fish. In winter, they could have snowball fights. When recess was over, students went back to their desks. They had three more hours of study before the long walk home.
5. What does the author compare in this article?
   a. the school supplies used in country schools and in schools today
   b. how younger and older children were taught in country schools in the past
   c. the school experience of country-school students and today's students

6. What is one piece of evidence used to show that country schools were uncomfortable?
   a. They were cold in winter and hot in summer.
   b. All of the students had to share one teacher.
   c. At recess, children could swim in summer and have snowball fights in winter.

7. According to the article, how did students get to country schools in the 1800s?
   a. They rode a school bus.
   b. Their parents drove them in a horse-drawn wagon.
   c. They walked or rode horses.

8. It was common for students to miss school in the past. What do you think was one reason for this?
   a. Bad weather kept students from making the long walk.
   b. Parents didn't like it when teachers punished their children.
   c. Families did not have enough money to buy books for their children.

9. What is the main idea of the article?
   a. Country schools did not have what they needed to teach and care for students.
   b. Students at country schools in the 1800s faced difficulty and discomfort.
   c. Today's students should be grateful for their comfortable schools and nice school supplies.
The Teenage Brain

1 Some teenagers may look like adults on the outside. But teenagers are very different from adults on the inside. The human body might mature, or become fully developed, on the outside in the teenage years. However, the human brain does not mature until we are at least 25 years old.

2 Some teenagers take risks and make bad decisions. Compared with adults, teenagers break more laws. They have more accidents. They eat poorly, don’t sleep enough, and may try alcohol and drugs. Their emotions may change in an instant.

3 Scientists believe they know why teenagers can be hard to predict and make bad choices. It has more to do with the brain than bad behavior or a need to fight back against adults’ rules.

4 The brain starts to mature from the back, or the deep brain, forward. The part of the brain that controls emotions is called the amygdala. It is deep inside the brain, and it matures early. The amygdala is next to the hippocampus. The hippocampus controls long-term memory. The prefrontal cortex is at the front of the brain. The prefrontal cortex controls logic, thinking, planning, and decision making. It matures last.

5 If the prefrontal cortex is not mature, teens may make decisions based on emotion instead of logic. These can be risky and bad decisions because the teens don’t plan or think about what might happen. It is possible for teenagers and young adults to use logic and make good decisions. Scientists believe the difference depends on which part of their brain they are using at the time.

6 Scientists believe adults can help young people understand how their brain works. This can help teens and young adults make good decisions. Adults can show how they use logic and planning to make decisions in their own lives. They can talk about the difference between short-term and long-term benefits. Parents and other adults often feel like kids don’t listen when they recommend doing something, but studies show kids do listen to adults.

7 Adults can continue to help teenagers make decisions, even after the teen years end. The brain is not mature until age 25 or later, and a lot of important decisions will be made before then.
10. According to the article, which part of the brain develops last?
   a. the amygdala  
   b. the hippocampus  
   c. the prefrontal cortex

11. What does the amygdala control?
   a. emotions  
   b. planning  
   c. memory

12. Why should adults help young people make decisions, even in early adulthood?
   a. Young people need more time to mature today than they did in the past.  
   b. The brain is not mature until people are in their mid-20s or even older.  
   c. Young people spend too much time planning and have a hard time choosing what to do.

13. Which part of the brain helps people plan and make decisions?
   a. the amygdala  
   b. the hippocampus  
   c. the prefrontal cortex

14. Which is the best summary of the article?
   a. Teenagers may look fully grown on the outside, but their brains are not yet mature. As a result, they may make bad choices like breaking laws, using drugs, and taking risks. They may fight back against adults' rules.  
   b. Adults can help teenagers. They can show them how to make good decisions and to think about what might happen. They can help teenagers understand the benefits of different decisions. Scientists believe that young people do listen to adults.  
   c. Some teenagers make bad decisions because their brain has not matured. The part of the brain that controls emotions matures before the part that controls thinking and planning. Adults can help young people understand how to make good choices.
The Midas Touch

This story is a myth that comes from Greece. It tells about King Midas and his love of gold.

1 King Midas was a wealthy man. He had an entire room full of gold. He loved gold more than anything else in the world. No matter how much gold he had, he wanted more.

2 One day, King Midas did a favor for the god Dionysus. Dionysus was so thankful he told Midas he would grant a wish. Whatever King Midas wanted, Dionysus would give.

3 King Midas could have asked for another room full of gold or even an entire castle full of gold. But instead he wanted an endless supply of gold. He used his wish to ask Dionysus for a “golden touch.” King Midas wanted everything he touched to turn into gold.

4 Dionysus was a wise god, and he thought this was a bad idea. But King Midas said it was what he wanted, so Dionysus made the wish come true. Midas hurried home to try his new power. The first thing he touched was a bowl of fruit. Just like that, it turned to gold. The fruit had once been juicy and sweet. Now it was hard and cold. But King Midas didn’t see it that way. He was thrilled!

5 Next, he reached down and, with the tip of one finger, touched a little lamb. In an instant it turned to lifeless gold. King Midas was truly excited. He walked around his castle showing off his new skill. He turned his chariot to gold. Now the chariot was valuable, but it was useless for transportation. King Midas still did not see any problem with his new powers.

6 Midas wanted to show his daughter his new gift. “Marigold,” he called, “Come see what daddy can do!” The little girl came near, and her father took her by the hand. The second he touched her, she, too, turned to cold, lifeless gold. King Midas saw a statue of gold where his daughter had stood. “What have I done!” he cried.

7 The king was upset and unsure what to do. Everything he touched turned to gold. Useful things became useless. His food turned to gold, and he could not eat. His soft bed became cold and hard, and he could not sleep.

8 The next morning, King Midas went back to Dionysus. He begged the god to take back the golden touch and let his daughter live. Luckily, Dionysus was not only a wise god. He was also kind. He let King Midas wash off his “gift” in the river Pactolus, which became famous for its gleaming gold. King Midas hurried home to hug his daughter, who had come back to life, and sat down to a big meal.
15. What is the problem with the golden touch?
   a. It made King Midas sad, uncomfortable, and hungry.
   b. King Midas could never get enough gold to satisfy him.
   c. King Midas had nowhere to put all the valuable gold items.

16. When does King Midas begin to question his gift?
   a. when Dionysus tells him it’s a bad idea
   b. when the fruit turns to gold
   c. when his daughter becomes a statue

17. Where does most of the story take place?
   a. at Dionysus’s home
   b. in and near the king’s castle
   c. along the river Pactolus

18. Which word best describes King Midas?
   a. friendly
   b. wise
   c. greedy

19. What is the main theme of “The Midas Touch”?
   a. Greed can cause big problems.
   b. Everyone makes mistakes.
   c. Be careful about the gifts others give you.

20. What would probably have happened if Dionysus had made Midas keep the gift?
   a. Marigold would have come back to life.
   b. The gift would have killed King Midas.
   c. There would be more gold in the Pactolus River.
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