e-Buddies Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

What do e-Buddies do?
Individuals with and without intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD) develop friendships through virtual communication. e-Buddies members are also invited to engage in our virtual events and participate in the e-Buddies Community via our platform.

What is the e-Buddies Community platform?
A great way to continue to develop friendships virtually. In this space, you can interact with other e-Buddies through discussion posts, Q&As, and interest groups

What are e-Buddies Virtual Events?
These are fun events like trivia and movie nights that are offered to our e-Buddies community.

Do my e-Buddy and I both need to participate in the virtual events?
NO! Either both of you can come or just one of you whatever works for your schedule & interests.

Who is in e-Buddies?
e-Buddies participants are individuals with and without IDD that range in age from 13 to older adults.

What is the commitment if I am matched in an one-to-one friendship?
Participants are encouraged to contact each other at least once every two weeks for a minimum commitment of one year.

Is there a cost to join e-Buddies?
e-Buddies is free for all participants!

Does e-Buddies provide service/volunteer hours?
No. e-Buddies does not offer service/volunteer hours for involvement in our program

How are matches made?
Participants who are matched in a one-to-one friendship are paired based on age, gender preference, similar interests, and different geographic areas.

How soon will I have an e-Buddy?
Once you submit the e-Buddies application our staff begin to review and process your application. As soon as your application is approved, we will begin the matching process. However, please know that it can take some time to find someone who meets our matching criteria. While you are waiting to be matched in a one-to-one friendship, you can participate in our virtual events and join our vibrant e-Buddies community via our platform.

Is it safe to participate in e-Buddies?
Best Buddies is dedicated to ensuring the safety and privacy of all our participants. All applicants are screened and must agree to the terms of the Code of Conduct before they can participate.
Who has access to the information that I provide on the e-Buddies application?
Best Buddies considers all information provided on the e-Buddies application highly confidential. We keep this information on a secure server and only authorized Best Buddies staff members can access this information. Best Buddies does not sell or trade this information with anyone.

Joining e-Buddies

How old do I need to be to join e-Buddies?
You must be at least 13 years old to participate.

How do I sign up?
Please complete our application [here](https://www.bestbuddies.org/what-we-do/ebuddies/). Or, visit, [https://www.bestbuddies.org/what-we-do/ebuddies/](https://www.bestbuddies.org/what-we-do/ebuddies/) and click on **JOIN e-BUDDIES**.

What information will I need to complete the application?
- Your email address
- Your contact information (mailing address, state)
- Birthdate
- Email address for parent/guardian (if needed)

Do I need my parent’s permission to participate?
If you are under the age of 18 you do need to have your parent’s permission to join e-Buddies. If you are over the age of 18 and have a legal guardian, you will need your guardian’s permission to join e-Buddies. The application will guide you through the process of obtaining your parent/guardian’s consent to join.

What happens after I submit my application?
e-Buddies staff will quickly begin to process your application. Please know that it can take some time until your application is approved. Once your application is approved, you will receive an invitation to join our e-Buddies Community platform and will be able to start attending our virtual events.

Does e-Buddies give me an email address?
No. e-Buddies is not an email service provider. You will use your own email address to participate in our program.
Communicating with my e-Buddy

How do I contact my e-Buddy?
To begin contacting your e-Buddy, you can contact them directly at the email address that was provided in your match notification email. After you have exchanged emails, it is up to both of you to determine how you would best like to communicate with one another.

This type of friendship is new to me. What do I do?
An e-Buddies friendship can be just like any other friendship you have except it takes place through virtual communication. Remember, you and your e-Buddy were matched because you share similar interests; so be yourself, write about things that interest you and ask questions!

Keep your first e-mails short and simple; share some information about yourself and ask them some questions. After exchanging some e-mails, it is okay to discuss if you would like to keep in contact through other means (text, skype, etc)

Please take a moment to watch How to be a Great Virtual Friend for some helpful tips on how to be a friend in a virtual space.

How do I get a conversation started with my e-Buddy?
Conversations through a virtual friendship can be started the same way that are through other friendships. When you are matched, e-Buddies will let you know what interests you share; so you can start a conversation by asking questions about those interests. Some other topic ideas are holidays, seasons, sports, movies, tv shows, music, family, pets, hobbies, vacations, and food.

Can I add my e-Buddy on social media?
Yes! However, we do recommend that you start this process gradually. It is essential that both participants are comfortable and consent to adding one another on social media platforms.

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Liz and Bill were matched in a virtual friendship through e-Buddies. After exchanging emails for a few weeks, Liz asked Bill if she could add him on Facebook. Bill loves Facebook and says yes. Now, Liz and Bill can message each other through Facebook and see photos of one another. Several weeks after, Liz asks if she can add Bill on Snapchat. Bill is not comfortable with adding Liz on Snapchat so he tells Liz he would rather just stick to Facebook.

How much information about myself do I need to share with my e-Buddy?
There are no specifications on the amount or type of information that you need to share with your e-Buddy. The goal of e-Buddies is to develop a quality friendship virtually. It is up to you and your e-Buddy to determine what type of friendship that will be. You should take it at the pace that you feel most comfortable
with. If your e-Buddy asks questions that you are not comfortable responding to, you should reply to your e-Buddy that you are not ready to discuss that information at this point.

What happens if I am not able to contact my e-Buddy every two weeks?
e-Buddies encourages participants to contact one another every two weeks. However, just like any other friendship, there may be times where you contact your e-Buddy more frequently and times where you are unable to make contact as often. Just let your e-Buddy know!

If my e-Buddy does not reply to me, should I reach out again?
Yes! Many different circumstances can case someone not to reply. If you reach out multiple times and do not hear back for several weeks, please contact ebuddies@bestbuddies.org. However, if your e-Buddy tells you that they are not able to reply at this time, respect that boundary.

Can I give my e-Buddy my phone number?
Yes, you are allowed to share your phone number with your e-Buddy. However, both participants must be comfortable and consent to sharing their phone numbers. If is also okay to choose not to share your phone number. If you decide to share your phone number, it is important to set boundaries as to when you can communicate via phone.

Can I video-chat with my e-Buddy?
Yes. Just like sharing your phone number, this is something that both participants must be comfortable doing. Any inappropriate behavior over video will not be tolerated and should be reported to ebuddies@bestbuddies.org immediately.

What do I do if my e-Buddy is contacting me too frequently?
In order for a friendship to be successful, it is important to be honest with your e-Buddy. If your e-Buddy is contacting you too frequently, try setting very specific boundaries with them. If you are setting boundaries and they are not respecting your time & requests, please reach out to ebuddies@bestbuddies.org.

You can also recommend that your e-Buddy watch How to be a Great Virtual Friend for some helpful tips on how to be a friend in a virtual space.