

How to ask a friend if they're OK



We all have good and bad days

But did you know young people are **most likely** to talk to friends or family members as the first step in seeking support when they're struggling.

Asking a friend how they're going could be the first step in getting them the help they need.

You're not expected to fix someone's problems or know the best way to help and support. But you can listen to what your friend is saying, let them know you care and tell a trusted adult if you're worried about them.



Learn how to ask a friend R U OK? in this guide



When to ask R U OK?

These are some of the signs or changes that can indicate a friend might need some support.

You might notice that they:

- Withdraw from their friends or their family.
- Lash out at people and get angry or upset easily, including towards the people they care about.
- Cry or become emotional.
- Lose interest in activities and things they usually love.
- Have changed their sleeping patterns. They might be sleeping all the time, not sleeping much at all, or sleeping at strange hours (like in the middle of the day).
- They could be eating more than usual, or less.



The most important thing is to trust your gut. If you notice a change or just feel that something's not quite right with your mate, take the time to ask, "are you OK?"

Before you ask R U OK?

- Make sure you're in a good headspace, so you're not distracted or stressed.
- To help them feel comfortable opening up, find a time and place that works for you both.



For more tips visit ruok.org.au

RUOK?TM

A conversation could change a life.



1. Ask R U OK?

- Be yourself, be genuine and start the conversation in a way that feels right for you and your friendship with them. You don't need to dive into the heavy stuff straight away. You might start by talking about general stuff. When you're ready to ask them how they're going **you could ask something like:**



How are you?

I'm here for you if there's anything going on you want to talk about?

My week's been rough. How was yours?

How are things going at home/school/uni/TAFE/work?

- It can help to **make an observation about a change you've noticed:**

You seem pretty tired. What's been going on?

I haven't seen you around as much lately. How have you been?

It's not like you to react that way. Is there anything going on for you?

- Sometimes it takes a while for someone to feel ready to open up. If they're not ready to talk, give them some time, and if there's an opportunity that feels right then ask them again.
- If they don't want to talk let them know you're always ready to listen or ask if there's someone else they'd be more comfortable chatting to.



2. Listen

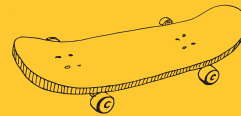
- Listening with an open mind and not judging shows your friend that you're there for them and helps them feel safe being honest with you.
- If there's silence, try and sit patiently with it. When someone's sharing for the first time it can take time for them to find the right words.
- You can show you're listening through eye contact and nodding at what they're saying.
- Asking open ended questions can help them open up.



How are you handling all of that?

Have you been feeling this way for a while?

What's been the hardest thing for you?



4. Check in

- Remember to check in a few days later to see how your friend is doing.
- Ask how they're going and if they've found a better way to manage the situation. They may not have taken any steps yet as it can take time for someone to be ready to get help. Be positive about the role of professionals and accessing support in managing tough times.
- It's important to stay in touch and show them you've got their back. Your ongoing care and support can make a difference.

3. Encourage action

- Things that could help include talking to a family member, friend or trusted adult or connecting with a health professional or support service.

- You could say:**

"What do you think might help you right now?"

"What can I do to help you?"

"Have you talked to anyone else about this? It's great you've opened up to me, but it might be good to get advice and support from a health professional."

"Your doctor can actually help you with this stuff. I can go along with you, if you want?"

"Did you know that you can get free and confidential support online or over the phone from places like Kids Helpline and ReachOut.Com? These services are confidential and can help you figure out what's going on for you and where you can find the right support. If you're looking for some face-to-face support I've heard headspace is great."



Useful contacts for someone who's not OK

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800

24/7 private and confidential phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5-25.

headspace
headspace.org.au

Support and information for young people 12-25 for mental health and what's going on in their life.

ReachOut.COM
au.reachout.com

Help with tough times for 14-25 year olds and their parents.

