

# **Family and relations**

## Relatives (= members of your family)

These are the most important relatives (also called **relations**):

	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>
Your parents' parents	grandfather	grandmother
Your parents' brother and sister	uncle(s)	aunt(s)
Your aunt's/uncle's children	cousin(s)	cousin(s)
The father and mother of the person you marry	father-in-law	mother-in-law
The brother and sister of the person you marry	brother-in-law	sister-in-law
Your brother's/sister's children	nephew(s)	niece(s)
The person you marry dies, so you are a ...	widower	widow
Your mother or father remarries, so you have a ...	step-father	step-mother

## Family background (= family history)

My grandfather was a market gardener in Ireland. He grew flowers, fruit and vegetables, and sold them in the market every day. He worked hard all his life, and when he died, his son (now my uncle) and daughter (my mother) **inherited** a large house and garden (= received this house and garden from my grandfather when he died). They carried on the business together until my mother met my father. They got married, moved to England, and I was born two years later. They didn't have any more children, so I am an **only child**.

## Friends

We can use a number of adjectives before **friend**:

an **old** friend (= someone you have known for a long time)

a **close** friend (= a good friend; someone you like and trust)

your **best** friend (= the one friend you feel closest to)

We use the word **colleagues** to describe the people we work with.

## Ex-

We use this for a husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend we had in the past but do not have now:

The children stay with my **ex-husband** at the weekend.

I saw an **ex-girlfriend** of mine at the disco last night.

**Answer these questions about yourself and your country.**

- 1 What's your first name?
- 2 What's your surname?
- 3 Is that a common name in your country?
- 4 Do you have a middle name?
- 5 Are you an only child?
- 6 Who is your oldest friend?
- 7 Do you work? If so, how many of your work colleagues are also your friends?
- 8 Do you have any ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends who speak English very well?
- 9 Are single-parent families becoming more common in your country?
- 10 In your country, do more and more people live together without getting married?

## Types of relationships

Here is a scale showing closeness and distance in relationships in different contexts.

	CLOSER	←—————→	MORE DISTANT	
<i>friendship:</i>	best friend	good friend	friend	acquaintance
<i>work:</i>	close colleague		colleague/workmate	
<i>love/romance:</i>	lover	steady boy/girlfriend		ex-*
<i>marriage:</i>	wife/husband/partner			ex-*

\* ex- can be used with or without (informally) another word: She's my ex. (girlfriend, etc.)

**Mate** is a colloquial word for a good friend. It can also be used in compounds to describe a person you share something with, e.g. **classmate**, **shipmate**, **workmate**, **flatmate**.

**Workmate** is usual in non-professional contexts; **colleague** is more common among professional people.

**Fiancé/ée** can still be used for someone you are engaged to, but a lot of people feel it is dated nowadays. You will sometimes see **husband-/wife-to-be** in journalistic style.

English has no universally accepted word for 'person I live with but am not married to', but **partner** is probably the commonest.

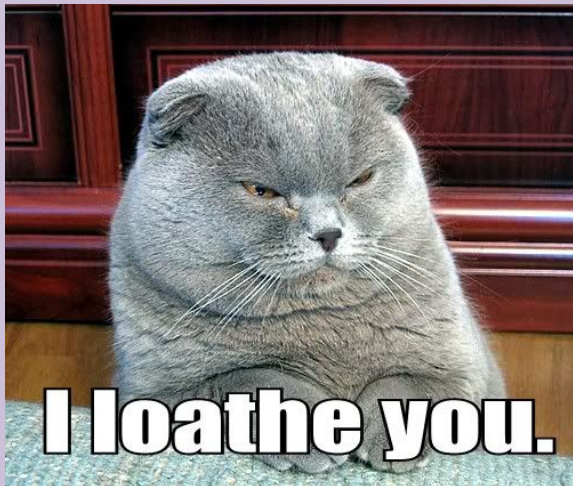
## Liking and not liking someone

<i>core verb</i>	<i>positive</i>	<i>negative</i>
like	love    adore worship    idolise	dislike    hate can't stand    loathe
respect	look up to    admire	look down on    despise
attract	turn s.b. on	repel    turn s.b. off
be attracted to	fancy	

She doesn't just like Bob she **idolises** him! I **can't stand** him.

I really **fancy** Lisa, but her friend just **turns me off**.

**Fancy** and **turn off** are informal. **Repel** is very strong and rather formal.



**Liking and disliking.** Using the verbs, phrases and idioms opposite, what sort of relations do you think the people on the left might have with the people on the right?

1 teenage music fan

parents      pop star  
strict teacher      mate

2 secretary

another secretary      boss  
very attractive workmate

3 45-year-old

teenagers      ex-husband/wife

## Phrases and idioms for relationships

Jo and I **get on well** with each other. [have a good relationship]

Adrian and Liz **don't see eye to eye**. [often argue/disagree]

I've **fallen out** with my parents again. [had arguments]

Tony and Jane have **broken up / split up**. [ended their relationship]

George is **having an affair** with his boss. [a sexual relationship, usually secret]

Children should **respect their elders**. [adults/parents, etc.]

Let's try and **make it up**. [be friends again after a row]

She's **my junior / I'm her senior / I'm senior to her**, so she does what she's told. [refers to position/length of service at work]



## Family relationships

Sociologists talk about **nuclear** and **extended families**. A **nuclear family** is just parents and children. An **extended family** is a wider network including grandparents, cousins, etc.

**Close relatives** are those like parents, children, brothers or sisters. **Distant relatives** are people like **second cousins** [the children of a cousin of your mother or father] or **distant cousins**.

**Close/immediate family** refers to people who are your nearest **blood relatives**:  
I don't have much **close/immediate family**.

She's a **distant cousin** of mine; she's not a **blood relative**.

*Close* can also be used to mean that the relationship is a very strong one:  
We are a very **close family**. *or* We are a very **close-knit family**.

We are a close-knit family



These adjectives also collocate with **family**:

**loving, respectable, dysfunctional** [unhappy, not working in a healthy way]

Simon came from a **respectable family**, so Mary's parents felt happy about the marriage.

Someone's **late husband/wife** is one who has died.

An **estranged** [formal] **husband/wife** is one who lives in a different place and has a difficult relationship with their husband/wife. They may be having a **trial separation** and may eventually decide to **get a divorce**. In some cases it can be a **bitter/acrimonious divorce**. [full of anger, arguments and bad feeling]

A person's **ex-husband/ex-wife** is a man/woman that she/he used to be married to.



Children whose parents have separated or divorced are said to come from a **broken home**. If their family is a strong, loving one it can be called a **stable home**. If it is a poor one, not having the things that are necessary for a pleasant life, such as enough money, food or good living conditions, it can be called a **deprived home**.

A **confirmed bachelor** is a man who seems to have no intention of ever marrying.



## Parents and children

<i>collocation</i>	<i>example</i>	<i>comment</i>
start a family	They are hoping to <b>start a family</b> soon.	NOT <del>begin</del> a family
have children	I'd like to <b>have</b> three <b>children</b> .	NOT <del>get</del> children
expect a baby	Soraya <b>is expecting a baby</b> .	NOT <del>wait (for)</del> a baby
have a baby	Jill <b>had her baby</b> yesterday.	NOT <del>get</del> a baby
the baby is due	The <b>baby is due</b> next week.	= expected to arrive
single parent/mother	It's hard being a <b>single parent</b> .	may be either unmarried or divorced
raise / bring up children / a family	Helen had to <b>bring up</b> four young <b>children</b> on her own.	<i>Raise a family</i> is more common in US than in UK English.
apply for custody of give/grant [formal] custody	The father <b>applied for custody of</b> the children, but the judge <b>gave/granted custody</b> to the mother.	<i>custody</i> : the legal right or duty to care for a child after its parents have separated or died
provide for your family	Nick works very long hours to <b>provide for his family</b> .	= to earn enough money to support your family
set up home	We live with my mum now, but we'll <b>set up home</b> on our own soon.	= to start an independent life in one's own flat or house

## Fill in the gaps

I grew up in an (1) **extended** family as my grandparents and a couple of aunts and an uncle, who was a (2) **confirmed** bachelor, lived with us. We saw a lot of our (3) **distant** relatives as well as our close ones. I think that families tended to be much more (4) **close-knit** then – we talked to each other more and did things together more. I'm sure there are far more (5) **dysfunctional** families now than there used to be – you know, where parents hardly spend any time with their children, or with each other – and a lot of parents who are divorced. My (6) **late** wife, who died two years ago, used to say that it is not fair on children to let them grow up in (7) **broken** homes.

**Answer these questions.**

- 1 Who do you have in your immediate family?
- 2 Do you have much contact with your distant relatives? If so, when?
- 3 Where did your parents first set up home?
- 4 Which would most children prefer to live in, and why, a stable home or a deprived home?
- 5 What collocation means the same as *to be pregnant*?
- 6 Can dysfunctional families also be respectable ones?
- 7 What can be put before the words *wife* and *husband* to indicate that they are no longer married to someone?
- 8 What is a more formal alternative for *give custody*?

Here are some common collocations relating to friends and friendship.

<i>collocation</i>	<i>example</i>	<i>comment</i>
make friends	When you go to university you will <b>make</b> a lot of new <b>friends</b> .	NOT <del>find</del> friends (a common student error)
strike up a friendship	Jack <b>struck up a friendship</b> with a girl he met on holiday.	= start a friendship
form/develop a friendship	Juliet <b>formed a</b> lasting <b>friendship</b> with the boy she sat next to at primary school.	NOT <del>make</del> a friendship
cement/spoil a friendship	Spending several weeks on holiday together has <b>cemented their friendship</b> .	<i>cement</i> = strengthen <i>spoil</i> = have a bad effect on
a friendship grows	We were at school together, but our <b>friendship grew</b> after we'd left school.	<i>grow</i> = get stronger
close/special friends mutual friends	I'm glad that our children are such <b>close friends</b> , aren't you?	<i>mutual friends</i> = friends that you share with someone else
a casual acquaintance	I don't know Rod well. We're just <b>casual acquaintances</b> .	= someone you know a little
have a good relationship with someone	Anna and Marie <b>have a very good relationship</b> . They love doing things together.	NOT have a <del>relation / relations</del> with
keep in contact/ touch	We must <b>keep in contact</b> when the course ends.	opposite = <b>lose contact/touch</b>

I fell madly in love with Anton from the moment I met him. It was certainly **love at first sight**. I knew at once that he was **the love of my life** but at first I was not sure if my **love was returned** or not. Within a few days, however, he had told me that he was **desperately in love** with me too. A couple of weeks later, we realised that we wanted to **make a commitment** to each other and, when Anton asked me to marry him, I immediately **accepted his proposal**. I'm sure we will always **love each other unconditionally**<sup>1</sup>. Neither of us would ever consider **having an affair**<sup>2</sup> with someone else.





## . Choose an appropriate word to complete each sentence.

- 1 Kay is quite a shy person and finds it hard to ..... friends.
- 2 Do Paul and Sophie ..... a good relationship?
- 3 Sam is always ..... up friendships with people he meets on trains and planes.
- 4 I hope their disagreement over the bill won't ..... their friendship.
- 5 It's amazing, when you meet someone new, how often you find that you have some ..... friends.
- 6 Apparently, people ..... most of their closest friendships when they are young.
- 7 I wouldn't call Graham a close friend, more a casual .....
- 8 We didn't really like each other at first, but our friendship ..... as we got to know each other better.

### Complete these questions. Then answer them.

- 1 Have you ever fallen in love at first .....
- 2 Do you think it's true that men are more reluctant to ..... a commitment than women?
- 3 How old were you when you ..... in love for the first time?
- 4 Do you think it is possible to have one person who is the love of your .....
- 5 Have you ever been in love with someone who has not ..... your love?
- 6 Do you think that men or women are more likely to be tempted to ..... an affair?

When Clifford met Annie, they found *one* thing in common. They both love lists. So together they have written the ultimate list, a list of rules for their marriage. This prenuptial agreement itemizes every detail of their lives together, from shopping to sex. *Timothy Laurence* met them in Florida in the apartment that they share.

The living room is neat and tidy, with a dining table already laid for a meal that has yet to be cooked. All the ingredients for the meal are in the kitchen, prepared, weighed, and waiting in a line. It is his turn to cook. Annie is chatting over a cup of coffee by the pristine kitchen bar when her fiance pours himself a cup and joins her. He touches her arm. She tenses, looks at him anxiously, and asks, 'Oh, sorry. Did I say something wrong?'

'No, no. I was just showing affection,' Clifford explains ponderously.

'Oh, I see,' says Annie.

His hand returns to her arm, and this time she relaxes. It is a significant moment, because spontaneity is not at the heart of this relationship. Love, for Clifford and Annie, means following a book of rules.

## **A signed, legal document**

They have become curiously famous since details of their prenuptial contract were publicized. They wanted a legal contract, signed and witnessed by lawyers. Their agreement is intended to regulate the chaotic heart, and smooth the path of true love before the journey of marriage has begun. 'We will have healthy sex 3 to 5 times per week it declares, and continues through every aspect of married life from the wedding itself, to a trip to the supermarket: "We will spend \$400 a month', to who is boss when it comes to the big decisions. They are getting married in six months time. The ceremony will last twenty minutes. The reception will be held in a restaurant on Miami beach. We will invite a total of twenty guests each, who will be served two drinks, one of which may be alcoholic.'

## List of rules

So what are some of the other rules that will lead to married bliss?

- Once we are married, we will each receive an allowance of \$70 per week to cover haircuts, eating out, gifts for friends, and spending money.
- We won't raise our voices at each other. If we get angry, we will count to 10 and take a deep breath.
- We will not use tobacco products.
- We will go to bed and turn out the lights by 11.30pm.
- Family leadership and decision-making will be Clifford's responsibility. Annie will make decision in emergencies and when Clifford is not available.
- We will buy unleaded fuel, and we won't let the fuel gauge get lower than half a tank.

If any of these rules are broken, a fine will have to be paid out of personal savings.

Everyone wants to know whether they are the saviours of modern marriage, or the butchers of romance. 'Did we put anything in the contract about love?' asks Annie, a little uncertainly. 'I think so,' says Clifford. Ah, yes, they did: 'We will provide unconditional love and fulfil each other's basic needs.' Oh, good. So that's all right then. Their prenuptial contract is a response to uncertainty, and a plan for emotional and financial security for the future. At 39, Clifford has been through two divorces and has two sons. Annie, 31, was married briefly and disastrously in her early twenties. As Clifford likes to point out, the divorce rate for first-time marriages is now 54 per cent. 'Nobody plans to fail,' he says, 'but a lot of people fail to plan. I'm going to write a book about our experience of a fully planned and programmed marriage, I just know that it will be a bestseller.'

## When Clifford met Annie

Clifford and Annie met at a dance, and started a cautious romance. He took her out to a movie and dinner, and gave her roses with a card signed *with affection* that she still keeps in her handbag. They started their own small marketing business, and in the running of the business discovered that they were both 'goal setters'. One day, not having anything else to talk about, they decided to create the perfect budget. 'We were really excited that we could agree on something so vital and fundamental to any enterprise, whether it's a business or a marriage,' says Clifford.

With so much romance in the air, their relationship deepened, and as the weeks passed, they began to make lists of increasingly personal concerns. From the start, they agreed that the big marriage breakers were money, behaviour, sex, and as children. 'Nothing is going to make this marriage go wrong,' says Clifford. 'Everything has already been planned.'

'In five years, we will have moved from our present address, and we will be living in a beach house overlooking the ocean.'

Annie sees their arrangements slightly differently. For her, the prenuptial contract was a way of getting to know Clifford — a kind of courtship, just probing and asking questions. If we don't like and respect each other, this union won't last.' She liked what she found, including a mutual fondness for lists. 9  
'I'd made a list of what I wanted in a man, what I liked, and what was unacceptable. I had prayed to God to find a man who was my father, only 30 years younger.'

She is very keen to have children, but Clifford admits to 'having problems' with the prospect of more kids, more college fees. Their contract states: 'We will not start a family for the first two years of our marriage.' 'So I'll be pregnant in three years,' Annie says, and then pauses. 'No, sooner than that. I'll be pregnant in 30 months ...'

Such is the wild intensity of passion in the heat of Florida.

## Comprehension check

Read the text more carefully and answer the questions.

- 1 Find some things that Annie and Clifford have in common, and some things that they *don't* have in common.
- 2 Annie and Clifford say that marriages fail because of arguments about money, behaviour, sex, and children. Which of their rules refer to these four things?
- 3 Are the following statements true (✓) or false (✗)? Correct the false ones with the right information and discuss your answers.
  - a Clifford does all the cooking.
  - b He prepares everything very carefully.
  - c Their apartment looks messy but comfortable.
  - d Annie misunderstands why Clifford touches her.
  - e They want the contract to ensure an uncomplicated divorce if they split up.
  - f There will be no alcohol at their wedding.
  - g If any of the rules are broken, they will divorce immediately.
  - h Clifford has no doubts that both his book and his marriage will be successful.
  - i On their first date, Clifford took Annie out to a dance.
  - j Annie had no idea what her perfect man would be like until she met Clifford.



What do you think?

- 1 Are Annie and Clifford 'the saviours of modern marriage, or the butchers of romance'?

Is it possible to 'regulate the chaotic heart and smooth the path of true love'?

- 2 Do you think the best couples ...  
... are of a similar age and background?  
... have a similar character and interests?
- 3 Who makes the decisions in your house?

## ● Reading

### Pre-reading task

Divide into two groups, those with children and those without.

Discuss the following questions.

#### Group A People with children

- 1 Who do your children look like?  
Who do they take after in character?
- 2 Have you brought up your children similarly to the way your parents brought *you* up?  
Are you more/less strict? More/less indulgent?
- 3 In what ways do you hope your children's life will be better than yours?

#### Group B People without children

- 1 Who do you most take after, your mother or your father?  
Who do you look like?  
Who are you like in character?
- 2 How much of a generation gap is there/was there between you and your parents?
- 3 Would you want to bring up your children similarly to the way your parents brought *you* up?

### **Jigsaw reading**

There is a feature in a magazine in which members of the same family describe their relationship.

You will read about James Mitford, an actor, and his daughter Amy.

**Group A** Read James Mitford's description of their relationship.

**Group B** Read Amy Mitford's description of their relationship.

As you are reading, try to answer the questions.

You won't be able to answer them all, so try to guess the answer if you're not sure.

**James Mitford:** My wife and I only had the one child. It might have been nice to have a son, but we didn't plan a family, we just had Amy.

I see her as my best friend. I think she'd always come to me first if she had a problem. We have the same sense of humour, and share interests. I don't mind animals, but she's completely obsessed with them, and she has always had dogs, cats, horses, and goldfish in her life.

We were closest when she was about four, which I think is a lovely age for a child. They know the parents best, and don't have the outside contacts. She must have grown up suddenly when she went to school, because I remember her *growing away from her family slightly*. Any father who has a teenager daughter comes across an extraordinary collection of people, and there seemed to be an endless stream of strange young men coming through our house. By the time I'd learned their names they'd gone away and I had to start learning a new lot. I remember I told her off once in front of her friends and she didn't talk to me for days afterwards.

I wanted more than anything else for her to be happy in what she was doing, and I was prepared to pull strings to help her on her way. She went to a good school, but that didn't work out. She must have upset somebody. When she left she decided she wanted to become an actress so I got her into drama school. It wasn't to her liking so she joined a theatre group and began doing bits and pieces in films. She was doing well, but then gave it up. She probably found it boring. Then she took up social work, and finally went to work for a designer and he became her husband. And that's really the story of her life. She must be happy with him — they're always together.

We have the same tastes in books and music, but it takes me a while to get used to new pop songs. I used to take her to see the opera, which is my big passion, but I don't think she likes it very much, she doesn't come with me any more.

I don't think she's a big television watcher. She knows when I'm on, and she might watch, but I don't know. It's not the kind of thing she tells me.

We're very grateful for Amy. She's a good daughter as daughters go. We're looking forward to being grandparents. I'm sure she'll have a son.

**Amy Mitford:** I don't really know my father. He isn't easy to get on with. He's quite self-centred, and a little bit vain, I think, and in some ways quite unapproachable. The public must think he's very easy-going, but at home he keeps himself to himself.

He can't have been at home much when I was a child, because I don't remember much about him. He's always been slightly out of touch with family life. His work always came first, and he was always off somewhere acting or rehearsing. He loves being asked for his autograph, he loves to be recognized. He has won several awards, and he's very proud of that. He was given the Member of the British Empire, and we had to go to Buckingham Palace to get the medal. It was incredibly boring — there were hundreds of other people getting the same thing, and you had to sit there for hours. He shows off his awards to whoever comes to the house.

I went to public school, and because of my total lack of interest and non-attendance I was asked to leave. I didn't want to go there in the first place. I was taken away from all my friends. He must have been very pleased to get me into the school, but in the end it was a complete waste of money. I let him down quite badly, I suppose. I tried several jobs but I couldn't settle down in them. They just weren't challenging enough. Then I realized that what I really wanted to do was live in the country and look after animals, so that's what I now do.

As a family, we're not that close, either emotionally or geographically. We don't see much of each other these days. My father and I are totally different, like chalk and cheese. My interests have always been the country, but he's into books, music and above all, opera, which I hate. If they do come to see us, they're in completely the wrong clothes for the country — mink coats, nice little leather shoes, not exactly ideal for long walks across the fields.

He was totally opposed to me getting married. He was hoping we would break up. Gerald's too humble, I suppose. He must have wanted me to marry someone famous, but I didn't, and that's all there is to it. We don't want children, but my father keeps on and on talking about wanting grandchildren. You can't make someone have children just because you want grandchildren.

I never watch him on television. I'm not that interested, and anyway he usually forgets to tell me when he's on.

## Comprehension check

In questions 1–3, there is not necessarily one correct answer only.

- 1 How would you describe their relationship?
  - a. It was closer when Amy was a child.
  - b. They get on well, and agree on most things.
  - c. He has more respect for her than she does for him.
  - d. They don't have very much in common.
- 2 How would you describe James Mitford?
  - a. He has done all that a father can for his daughter.
  - b. He isn't very aware of how she really feels.
  - c. He's more interested in himself than his family.

- 3 How would you describe Amy?
  - a. She is selfish and spoilt.
  - b. It took her a long time to decide what she wanted to do in life.
  - c. She found happiness in marriage that she didn't have in childhood.
- 4 What did he think of her friends when she was a teenager?
- 5 Why did she leave school?
- 6 Why did she give up her jobs?
- 7 What does he think of her husband?
- 8 Is she interested in his career?
- 9 Is she going to have children?
- 10 How often do they see each other?

When you have answered as many questions as you can, find a partner from the other group.

Compare your answers and swap information.

## What do you think?

Who has the more realistic view of the relationship?

Why?