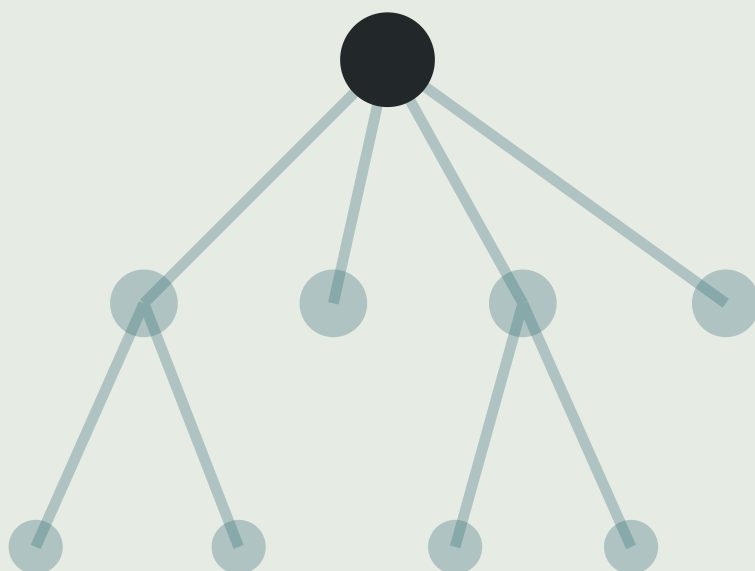




The Big Book of “What If?”

200 real-life situations, and what might happen next.

PAWSTEPS

200 situations

10 sections

Before You Start

This isn't a book of right answers.

Every page gives you a situation — something that could happen to you at school, at home, with friends, or out in the world. Then it gives you a few things you *could* do. None of them are labelled “correct”, because in real life nobody hands you the answer sheet.

What each page does ask is the useful question: **what happens next?**

Because that's the bit most of us forget. We do the first thing that comes into our head, and then we find out. This book lets you find out first, in your head, where it's free.

HOW TO USE IT

Open it anywhere. Read the situation. Pick the option you'd honestly choose — not the one that sounds best. Then read the *Play it forward* question and think it through properly. Ten seconds is enough.

Some pages will feel easy. Some will feel uncomfortably familiar. Both are useful.

FOR THE ADULT READING THIS ALONGSIDE SOMEONE

One situation at a time works better than ten. Ask which option they'd pick before offering your own. If they choose the option you were hoping they wouldn't, resist correcting it — ask what happens next instead, and let the consequence do the teaching. The *Worth knowing* line is there to give you something to say when the conversation stalls, not to close it down.

There's no order. There's no test at the end.

SECTION ONE

Friends and Fitting In

SITUATIONS 1-20

1 What if your friend doesn't invite you to their party?

You hear about it on Monday. Everyone else was there.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say nothing and act like you don't care.
- B. Tell them you felt left out.
- C. Decide they're not your friend anymore.
- D. Ask, calmly, if there was a reason.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you pick C, what happens on Tuesday? And Wednesday?

WORTH KNOWING

Parties often have a number limit set by a grown-up. That doesn't make it hurt less — but it might change what it means.

2 What if everyone's talking about something you weren't part of?

They're laughing about a joke from Saturday. You weren't there.

YOU COULD...

- A. Laugh along and pretend you were.
- B. Ask them to explain it.
- C. Walk away.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What happens when someone asks you a question about Saturday and you have to keep pretending?

WORTH KNOWING

"I wasn't there — what happened?" is a much smaller sentence than it feels like.

3 What if someone won't let you join their game?

You walk over. They say the game is full.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say "fine" and walk off.
- B. Ask what the game is and whether you can join the next round.
- C. Tell a grown-up they're being mean.
- D. Start your own game somewhere nearby.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option makes it most likely you get asked to play tomorrow?

WORTH KNOWING

"It's full" is sometimes true and sometimes an excuse. Asking about the *next* round tells you which one you're dealing with.

4 What if your best friend has a new best friend?

They're sitting together. They've got a thing they say that you don't understand.

YOU COULD...

- A. Compete for attention.
- B. Say something unkind about the new friend.
- C. Join in with both of them.
- D. Find someone else to sit with and feel awful about it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Imagine option B works, and the new friendship ends. Does your friend know it was you? What then?

WORTH KNOWING

Friendship isn't a chair with only one seat. It feels like one, though.

5 What if you're picked last for a team?

The captains are choosing. The pile of unpicked people is getting smaller. Then it's just you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Make a joke about it first, before anyone else does.
- B. Say nothing and play badly on purpose.
- C. Say nothing and play as well as you can.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What do the captains remember next week — the order they picked, or how you played?

WORTH KNOWING

Being picked last is about who's fastest at football. It isn't about who's worth the most.

6 What if you want to make a friend but don't know how to start?

There's someone you'd like to talk to. You've been not-talking to them for about three weeks now.

YOU COULD...

- A. Wait for them to speak first.
- B. Ask them something about the thing they're doing.
- C. Say something impressive to get their attention.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How long could option A last? Honestly?

WORTH KNOWING

Almost every friendship starts with a boring sentence. "Are you doing the maths one?" is a perfectly good beginning.

7 What if someone copies everything you do?

Your bag. Your words. The way you said that one thing.

YOU COULD...

- A. Tell them to stop, in front of everyone.
- B. Tell them quietly it makes you uncomfortable.
- C. Change what you do so they can't copy it.
- D. Let it go.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you pick A, how do they feel? And how do the people watching feel about you?

WORTH KNOWING

People usually copy the person they most want to be like. It's annoying and it's a compliment at the same time.

8 What if your friend only ever wants to play their game?

Every break. Their rules. Their choice.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep going along with it.
- B. Say you'd like to choose sometimes.
- C. Stop playing with them.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you never say anything, how would they ever find out you mind?

WORTH KNOWING

"Can we do mine tomorrow?" is a request, not a complaint. Most people say yes.

9 What if you're new and don't know anyone?

First day. Everyone else seems to have known each other since they were four.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stay quiet and wait to be approached.
- B. Ask someone a practical question — where the hall is, which book you need.
- C. Try to be the funniest person in the room immediately.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these is easiest to keep doing on day two, and day three?

WORTH KNOWING

Being new is temporary. Most people forget you were ever new within about a fortnight.

10 What if two friends both want you at break?

They're standing in different places. Both looking at you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pick one and hope the other doesn't mind.
- B. Suggest all three of you do something.
- C. Avoid both and go somewhere else.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you pick the same person every time, what does the other one start to believe?

WORTH KNOWING

You're allowed to say "today I'll go with them, tomorrow with you" out loud. It sounds odd. It works.

11 What if your friend is friends with someone you don't like?

They get on well. You can't see why.

YOU COULD...

- A. Make your friend choose.
- B. Say nothing and be polite when they're around.
- C. List everything wrong with that person.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does your friend learn about you from option A — and would they trust you more or less afterwards?

WORTH KNOWING

You don't have to like everyone your friends like. You do have to let your friends have their own opinions.

12 What if nobody laughs at your joke?

Silence. Someone coughs.

YOU COULD...

- A. Explain the joke.
- B. Say it again, louder.
- C. Move on as if nothing happened.
- D. Laugh at yourself.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How long will anyone remember this — if you don't keep bringing it up?

WORTH KNOWING

Explaining a joke has never once rescued it. Not in the whole of history.

13 What if you're eating lunch on your own?

Everyone seems to have a table. You've got a sandwich and a chair.

YOU COULD...

- A. Ask to sit at a table with space.
- B. Eat quickly and leave.
- C. Sit alone on purpose and enjoy it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Is today's lunch a one-off, or is it turning into a habit? Does that change which option you'd pick?

WORTH KNOWING

Eating alone sometimes is fine. Eating alone every day when you'd rather not is worth telling someone about.

14 What if someone calls you their friend but you don't feel like one?

They tell people you're close. You'd say you're just... around each other.

YOU COULD...

- A. Correct them publicly.
- B. Say nothing and let it be.
- C. Spend a bit of time with them and see what happens.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does option A cost them, in front of other people?

WORTH KNOWING

Sometimes people call you a friend because they're hoping. That's a kind thing to be on the receiving end of, even if you don't feel the same.

15 What if your friend moves away?

Different school. Different town. Possibly different country.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say a proper goodbye.
- B. Avoid them for the last week so it hurts less.
- C. Make a plan for staying in touch.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these will you be glad about in a year?

WORTH KNOWING

Long-distance friendships survive on small, regular contact — not on grand promises made on the last day.

16 What if someone wants your company and you want to be alone?

They've found you. You'd come here specifically to not be found.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pretend to be busy.
- B. Say you need some quiet time and you'll find them later.
- C. Let them stay and feel irritated the whole time.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you pick C, what comes out in your voice by the end of break?

WORTH KNOWING

"I need a bit of quiet — see you after" is not rejection. Say the second half and people believe the first half.

17 What if you're invited somewhere you don't want to go?

They're excited about it. You'd rather do almost anything else.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say yes and then cancel at the last minute.
- B. Say no now, kindly.
- C. Go anyway and try to enjoy it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option leaves them the most time to make other plans?

WORTH KNOWING

A no now is a kindness. A no on the day is a problem.

18 What if everyone else has something you don't?

The trainers. The phone. The thing everyone's got.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pretend you've got one at home.
- B. Say you haven't got one.
- C. Ask at home, calmly, and accept the answer.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What happens to option A the first time someone asks to see it?

WORTH KNOWING

The list of things everyone else has changes about every six months. It never once gets shorter.

19 What if your friend is always busy now?

Clubs, family, other people. You keep asking. They keep having a reason.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stop asking and wait to be asked.
- B. Ask them directly if something's changed.
- C. Keep asking every day.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If they're genuinely busy, which option keeps the friendship alive? If they're not, which one tells you soonest?

WORTH KNOWING

Busy and drifting look identical from the outside. Asking is the only way to tell them apart.

20 What if someone older wants to hang around with you?

They're a few years above. They've started waiting for you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Feel flattered and go along with whatever they suggest.
- B. Enjoy the friendship but keep your own limits.
- C. Mention it to an adult at home, just so someone knows.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If they ask you to do something you're unsure about, who would you tell?

WORTH KNOWING

Most older friends are simply friends. But an older person who wants you to keep the friendship secret from adults is a different thing entirely — tell someone that day.

SECTION TWO

Falling Out and Fixing It

SITUATIONS 21-40

21 What if you and your friend have a big argument?

Voices raised. Both of you certain you're right.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep arguing until one of you gives in.
- B. Walk away and come back to it later.
- C. Bring other people in to take sides.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How many people know about it by the end of the day if you pick C? Can you un-tell them?

WORTH KNOWING

Almost no argument is solved while both people are still shouting. Time isn't losing.

22 What if someone says sorry but you're still upset?

They've apologised. You're supposed to be fine now. You're not.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say "it's fine" and carry on being upset.
- B. Say you accept the apology but you need a bit of time.
- C. Refuse to accept it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does option A do to the next argument you have with them?

WORTH KNOWING

An apology ends the wrongdoing. It doesn't switch off the feeling. Both things can be true.

23 What if you say something you immediately regret?

It's out. You can see it landing on their face.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pretend you were joking.
- B. Say straight away that you shouldn't have said it.
- C. Say nothing and hope they forget.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option is easier — apologising in the next ten seconds, or in three days?

WORTH KNOWING

"That came out wrong, I'm sorry" costs almost nothing when it's immediate. The price goes up every hour you wait.

24 What if your friend tells someone your secret?

You told one person. Now three people know.

YOU COULD...

- A. Tell one of their secrets back.
- B. Tell them what they did and how it felt.
- C. Never tell them anything again and not explain why.

PLAY IT FORWARD

After option A, how many secrets are safe? Yours or theirs?

WORTH KNOWING

People who share secrets usually didn't plan to. It's worth knowing whether it was cruelty or carelessness before you decide what to do.

25 What if you need to apologise but you're too embarrassed?

You know you were wrong. The words won't come out.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do something nice instead and hope it counts.
- B. Say it quickly, in private, and get it over with.
- C. Write it down and give it to them.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does option A tell them what you're sorry *for*?

WORTH KNOWING

Apologies are almost always shorter than we rehearse. Name the thing, say sorry, stop talking.

26 What if you're blamed for something you didn't do?

Everyone's looking at you. You didn't do it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Shout that it wasn't you.
- B. Say calmly it wasn't you, and offer what you do know.
- C. Take the blame to end it quickly.
- D. Name who really did it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these does a grown-up find easiest to believe? Which do the other children find hardest to forgive?

WORTH KNOWING

Being loud and being believed aren't the same thing. Calm is more convincing than volume, nearly every time.

27 What if you did it and nobody knows?

You got away with it. It's sitting in your chest.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say nothing. Nobody's asking.
- B. Own up now.
- C. Wait and see if it comes out.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If someone else gets blamed tomorrow, which option are you glad you picked?

WORTH KNOWING

Owning up before you're caught is treated completely differently from owning up afterwards. By everyone.

28 What if your friend is angry and won't tell you why?

Short answers. Not sitting with you. Something has clearly happened.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep asking until they crack.
- B. Say you've noticed and you're around when they want to talk.
- C. Get annoyed back.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If they need an hour, which option gives them one?

WORTH KNOWING

"I'm here when you're ready" is one of the most useful sentences in this book. It works on adults too.

29 What if someone gives you the silent treatment?

They're not speaking to you. They're making sure you can tell.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it back.
- B. Ask once what's wrong, then get on with your day.
- C. Chase them around trying to fix it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Silence works because someone is upset by it. What happens to it if you're calmly fine?

WORTH KNOWING

Asking once is fair. Asking eleven times hands over control of your whole break.

30 What if you're asked to pick a side?

Two friends have fallen out. Both want you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pick the one you like most.
- B. Say you're staying friends with both.
- C. Pretend to agree with whichever one you're standing next to.

PLAY IT FORWARD

When they make up next week — and they might — where does option C leave you?

WORTH KNOWING

"I'm not picking. I'm friends with both of you" annoys everyone for two days and saves you for two years.

31 What if someone keeps bringing up an old argument?

It was sorted weeks ago. It keeps coming back as ammunition.

YOU COULD...

- A. Argue it all again.
- B. Say you thought it was finished and ask what's really bothering them.
- C. Bring up something old of theirs.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If old arguments can be reopened, how many are stored up between you?

WORTH KNOWING

When someone keeps returning to an old thing, the old thing usually isn't the thing.

32 What if someone apologises in a way that doesn't sound sorry?

"Sorry if you were upset." Said with a shrug.

YOU COULD...

- A. Accept it and move on.
- B. Say what you actually needed to hear.
- C. Refuse to speak to them.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Do they know which part upset you? Would they, unless you said?

WORTH KNOWING

Some people apologise badly because they've never seen it done well. It's worth one attempt at telling them.

33 What if you break a promise?

You said you would. You didn't.

YOU COULD...

- A. Explain why before they raise it.
- B. Wait to see if they noticed.
- C. Point out that they've broken promises too.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option makes your next promise worth something?

WORTH KNOWING

Promises are a kind of currency. Break enough and yours stops being accepted.

34 What if someone breaks a promise to you?

They said they'd come. They didn't.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say it doesn't matter.
- B. Tell them you were counting on it.
- C. Break the next promise you make to them, to even it up.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If it happens a third time, what have you already decided by saying "it doesn't matter" twice?

WORTH KNOWING

One broken promise is life getting in the way. A pattern is information.

35 What if you win and they take it badly?

You won fairly. They're furious.

YOU COULD...

- A. Celebrate loudly anyway.
- B. Say it was close and offer another game.
- C. Tell them to get over it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Who will people want to play with next time — the person in option A, or the one in option B?

WORTH KNOWING

How you win decides whether anyone plays with you again. It matters more than winning.

36 What if you lose and you take it badly?

You can feel it happening. The hot, unfair feeling.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say the game was rigged.
- B. Say "good game" through your teeth and mean it later.
- C. Walk off without a word.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one are you least embarrassed about at bedtime?

WORTH KNOWING

You're allowed to mind losing. You're just not allowed to make it everyone's problem.

37 What if your friendship group splits in two?

Half go one way. Half the other. Everyone's watching to see where you go.

YOU COULD...

- A. Go with the bigger group.
- B. Go with the people you actually like.
- C. Move between both.

PLAY IT FORWARD

In a month, which group would you rather be sitting with — and does that change your answer?

WORTH KNOWING

Group splits usually reverse or reshuffle within a term. Try not to burn anything you'd want back.

38 What if someone says "I'm not your friend anymore"?

Said in temper. Possibly meant. Possibly not.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say it back.
- B. Say "okay" and leave the door open.
- C. Beg them not to mean it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If they turn up tomorrow acting normal, which option makes that easy for both of you?

WORTH KNOWING

In the heat of an argument, most people say the biggest sentence they can find. It's often the least true one.

39 What if you want to make up but they've moved on?

You're ready. They've got new people and don't seem bothered.

YOU COULD...

- A. Make one clear, friendly approach.
- B. Keep trying every day.
- C. Decide you never liked them anyway.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does option B do to your dignity, and to their willingness?

WORTH KNOWING

You can control the offer. You can't control the answer. Making the offer once is enough to have done the right thing.

40 What if you're still angry the next day?

You slept on it. It's still there when you wake up.

YOU COULD...

- A. Restart the argument at 8:45am.
- B. Tell them you're still upset and want to sort it properly.
- C. Bottle it and be snappy all day.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option gives the other person any chance of fixing it?

WORTH KNOWING

Anger that survives a night usually means something didn't get said. Work out what it was before you open your mouth.

SECTION THREE

Big Feelings

SITUATIONS 41–60

41 What if you feel angry enough to shout?

It's rising. Chest, throat, hands.

YOU COULD...

- A. Shout.
- B. Leave the room and come back.
- C. Say "I need a minute" out loud.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What do you have to clean up after option A that you don't after option C?

WORTH KNOWING

Anger peaks and drops fast — often inside a couple of minutes. Almost everything gets easier if you can outlast the peak.

42 What if you feel like crying at school?

It's coming. And there are twenty-nine other people in the room.

YOU COULD...

- A. Fight it and hope it passes.
- B. Ask to step out for a moment.
- C. Let it happen.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option gives you the most control over where you are when it happens?

WORTH KNOWING

Most schools have an agreed way to step out without a fuss. Worth knowing yours *before* you need it.

43 What if you're worried about tomorrow?

It's tonight. Tomorrow is enormous.

YOU COULD...

- A. Think it through over and over.
- B. Tell someone at home what specifically you're worried about.
- C. Distract yourself completely.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these makes tomorrow smaller? Which makes it bigger?

WORTH KNOWING

Worry shrinks when it gets specific. "School" is huge. "The first ten minutes of PE" is a size you can plan for.

44 What if you feel jealous of your friend?

They got the thing, the part, the score. You're pleased for them. You're also not.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say something to take the shine off it.
- B. Congratulate them and feel what you feel privately.
- C. Avoid them for a bit.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How would you want them to behave if it were the other way round?

WORTH KNOWING

Jealousy isn't a character flaw. Acting on it is the only bit anyone else ever sees.

45 What if you say something embarrassing?

The room goes quiet in that particular way.

YOU COULD...

- A. Freeze.
- B. Laugh and carry on.
- C. Apologise five times.
- D. Leave.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much does everyone else remember tomorrow — compared to how much you remember?

WORTH KNOWING

Other people are mostly thinking about themselves. Your worst moment is a two-minute story to them and a two-year one to you.

46 What if you trip over in front of everyone?

Full length. Maximum audience.

YOU COULD...

- A. Take a bow.
- B. Get up fast and say nothing.
- C. Blame the floor. Loudly.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these turns the laugh from *at* you into *with* you?

WORTH KNOWING

People laugh at falls automatically — it's reflex, not judgement. What happens in the next three seconds is what they'll actually remember.

47 What if you're so excited you can't sit still?

Fizzing. Everything's brilliant. You're being told to settle down.

YOU COULD...

- A. Try to hold it all in.
- B. Ask if you can move about for a minute.
- C. Let it out at full volume.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option lets you keep the good feeling without losing the room?

WORTH KNOWING

Excitement and anger use the same fuel. Both do better with somewhere to go.

48 What if everything feels too loud?

The hall. The scraping chairs. The strip light doing that thing.

YOU COULD...

- A. Put up with it until you can't.
- B. Ask for a quieter spot before it gets bad.
- C. Cover your ears and stay put.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's different about asking at the start of the noise instead of at the end of your patience?

WORTH KNOWING

Asking early gets a helpful answer. Asking at breaking point gets a fuss. Same request, different result.

49 What if you can't explain what's wrong?

Something is. You've got no words for it and someone keeps asking.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say "nothing".
- B. Say you don't know how to explain it yet.
- C. Point at something close to it — tired, cross, full-up.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these gets you left alone in a good way, rather than a bad way?

WORTH KNOWING

"I don't know what it is yet" is a real, honest answer. Adults can work with it. "Nothing" leaves them guessing.

50 What if you feel left out but you can't say why?

Nobody's been unkind. You still feel outside it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Assume it's you and stay quiet.
- B. Tell one person you're feeling a bit on the edge.
- C. Wait for someone to notice.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How would anyone know, if nothing visible has happened?

WORTH KNOWING

People aren't ignoring you on purpose nearly as often as it feels. Most of them are worrying about the same thing.

51 What if someone tells you to calm down?

You are not calm. That sentence has never helped anyone in history.

YOU COULD...

- A. Shout that you *are* calm.
- B. Say what would actually help — space, quiet, a minute.
- C. Walk off.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one gets you what you need fastest?

WORTH KNOWING

Most people who say "calm down" want to help and have no idea how. Telling them the how is allowed.

52 What if you feel proud and want to tell everyone?

You did a good thing. You'd like the world informed.

YOU COULD...

- A. Tell everyone, repeatedly.
- B. Tell the people who'll be pleased for you.
- C. Say nothing in case it sounds like showing off.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's the difference between telling someone once and telling them four times?

WORTH KNOWING

Being pleased with yourself is not showing off. Needing everyone else to be pleased too is where it tips.

53 What if you're scared of something other people find easy?

The dog. The dark. The diving board. The phone call.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pretend you're not.
- B. Say you find it hard and do it anyway, slowly.
- C. Avoid it forever.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does option C cost you in a year? In five?

WORTH KNOWING

Fear shrinks with contact and grows with avoidance. Small steps count as contact.

54 What if you're bored?

Nothing to do. Nothing appealing. A flat grey afternoon.

YOU COULD...

- A. Complain until someone solves it.
- B. Pick the least bad option and start.
- C. Wait for boredom to end on its own.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How often has option A actually produced something good?

WORTH KNOWING

Boredom is usually the ten minutes before an idea. Most people fill it before the idea arrives.

55 What if you feel guilty?

You've done something. It's still sitting there.

YOU COULD...

- A. Push it down and get on.
- B. Fix what can be fixed and say sorry for the rest.
- C. Punish yourself about it for weeks.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option changes anything for the person you affected?

WORTH KNOWING

Guilt is useful for about as long as it takes to act on. After that it's just weight.

56 What if something you'd looked forward to is cancelled?

Weeks of waiting. One message.

YOU COULD...

- A. Take it out on whoever tells you.
- B. Be disappointed out loud, then ask if it can be rearranged.
- C. Say you didn't want to go anyway.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Is the person telling you the person who cancelled it?

WORTH KNOWING

Disappointment aimed at the messenger tends to reduce your chances of the rearranged date.

57 What if someone laughs at you for crying?

You're already upset. Now this.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stop crying and hide it.
- B. Move away from them and finish being upset somewhere else.
- C. Tell an adult what they did.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these leaves you least likely to hide it next time?

WORTH KNOWING

Someone laughing at tears is telling you about them, not about you. Nobody worth your time does that.

58 What if you feel fine but everyone assumes you're not?

Your face does something. People keep asking if you're okay.

YOU COULD...

- A. Snap that you're fine.
- B. Say "I'm alright — this is just my face."
- C. Pretend to be cheerful all day.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How tiring is option C by two o'clock?

WORTH KNOWING

Some faces read as cross or sad by default. Saying so once, lightly, saves the question fifty times.

59 What if there are too many choices?

Six options. All fine. You're stuck.

YOU COULD...

- A. Wait until someone chooses for you.
- B. Cut it to two and pick one.
- C. Pick the first one and stop thinking.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much does the difference between the options actually matter in an hour?

WORTH KNOWING

For small decisions, deciding fast is worth more than deciding perfectly. Save the careful thinking for the big ones.

60 What if you can't stop thinking about something that went wrong?

It replays. On loop. Usually at night.

YOU COULD...

- A. Go over it again looking for what you should have said.
- B. Tell someone about it out loud.
- C. Write down the one thing you'd do differently, then stop.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Has going over it a twelfth time ever produced new information?

WORTH KNOWING

Thoughts get stuck when they've got nowhere to go. Saying them or writing them down usually unsticks them.

SECTION FOUR

When Something Goes Wrong

SITUATIONS 61-80

61 What if you accidentally break something?

It was in one piece a second ago.

YOU COULD...

- A. Put it back and hope nobody notices.
- B. Tell someone straight away.
- C. Hide the pieces.
- D. Blame the nearest person.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What happens when it's found next Tuesday — and someone remembers you were there?

WORTH KNOWING

Accidents are forgiven quickly. Covering them up almost never is.

62 What if you break something that belongs to someone else?

Not yours. Definitely theirs. Definitely broken.

YOU COULD...

- A. Tell them and offer to help fix or replace it.
- B. Say nothing and see if they notice.
- C. Say it was already broken.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How does the conversation go if they find out later that you knew?

WORTH KNOWING

"I broke it, I'm sorry, what can I do?" is a hard sentence and a short one. The alternative lasts weeks.

63 What if you lose something you borrowed?

Gone. You've checked everywhere twice.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep looking and say nothing yet.
- B. Tell them now and keep looking.
- C. Hope they forget they lent it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If it turns up in their bag search next week, what have you lost besides the object?

WORTH KNOWING

Telling them early means they can help look. That's usually the fastest route to finding it.

64 What if you spill something?

All over the floor. Or the table. Or someone.

YOU COULD...

- A. Clean it up.
- B. Move away and let someone else find it.
- C. Make a joke and leave it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Who ends up cleaning it if you don't?

WORTH KNOWING

Dealing with your own mess is one of the fastest ways to be thought well of. It's noticed far more than you'd think.

65 What if you're lost?

Unfamiliar street, or a shop, or a big building. No sign of anyone you know.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep walking and hope it starts looking familiar.
- B. Stay where you are and look for a person who works there.
- C. Ask the first stranger you see.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option makes you easiest to find for the people looking for you?

WORTH KNOWING

Staying still beats wandering, almost always. If you need to ask, pick someone with a uniform or a name badge, or a parent with children.

66 What if you forget your kit?

PE. Swimming. The thing you needed today.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say nothing and hope it's not noticed.
- B. Tell the teacher before the lesson starts.
- C. Blame someone at home.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these gives the teacher time to sort something out?

WORTH KNOWING

Teachers mind being told at the last second far more than they mind the forgetting.

67 What if you're late?

Everyone's already started. You have to walk in.

YOU COULD...

- A. Sneak in quietly and hope.
- B. Come in, apologise briefly, sit down.
- C. Make a big entrance and a long excuse.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How long does option C take out of the lesson — and whose attention does it use up?

WORTH KNOWING

A quick "sorry I'm late" and sitting down is the whole thing. Long explanations make small problems bigger.

68 What if you forget someone's name?

They've clearly known yours for months.

YOU COULD...

- A. Avoid using any name at all, forever.
- B. Admit it and ask.
- C. Guess.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How bad is option C if you guess wrong out loud?

WORTH KNOWING

"I'm so sorry — remind me of your name?" is mildly awkward for four seconds. Option A is awkward for years.

69 What if you've been calling someone the wrong name for weeks?

They never corrected you. You've just found out.

YOU COULD...

- A. Quietly start using the right one and never mention it.
- B. Apologise and get it right from now on.
- C. Insist you knew all along.

PLAY IT FORWARD

They've noticed. They've noticed for weeks. Does option A acknowledge that?

WORTH KNOWING

Getting someone's name right matters more than most people realise — especially to the person whose name it is.

70 What if you forget a friend's birthday?

It was yesterday. You've just seen the photos.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say nothing and hope it slid past.
- B. Say sorry you missed it and mark it now.
- C. Pretend you were going to say something today anyway.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option would you rather receive?

WORTH KNOWING

Late and meant beats on time and automatic. Most people are pleased to be remembered at all.

71 What if you make a mistake in front of the whole class?

Wrong answer. Said with confidence.

YOU COULD...

- A. Insist you were right.
- B. Say "ah, no — I see" and move on.
- C. Refuse to answer anything ever again.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does option C cost you over the rest of the year?

WORTH KNOWING

People who answer and get it wrong learn faster than people who stay silent and stay safe. Everyone knows this and it's still hard.

72 What if you can't find your bag?

Last seen: somewhere. Contains: everything.

YOU COULD...

- A. Panic loudly.
- B. Retrace where you've been, in order.
- C. Assume it's stolen and say so.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How often has the bag turned out to be exactly where you left it?

WORTH KNOWING

Retracing works because memory is attached to places. Start at the last place you're certain about.

73 What if you spend money and immediately regret it?

Gone. On something you didn't really want.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pretend you're pleased with it.
- B. Admit it was a mistake and remember the feeling.
- C. Blame whoever suggested it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What would you need to notice next time, ten seconds before you paid?

WORTH KNOWING

The regret is the useful bit. Ignore it and you'll pay for the same lesson again.

74 What if you told someone the wrong information?

They've acted on it. It was wrong.

YOU COULD...

- A. Correct it as soon as you realise.
- B. Let them find out themselves.
- C. Argue that you were basically right.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much bigger is the problem an hour from now?

WORTH KNOWING

People forgive being wrong. They remember being left to find out the hard way.

75 What if you ruin someone's work by accident?

Their model. Their page. One clumsy movement.

YOU COULD...

- A. Apologise and offer to help redo it.
- B. Point out it was an accident and leave it there.
- C. Deny touching it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

"It was an accident" is true — but does it fix anything for them?

WORTH KNOWING

Accidents explain what happened. Offering to help is what actually repairs it.

76 What if you're asked to fix something you can't?

Someone's handed it to you expecting a solution. You haven't got one.

YOU COULD...

- A. Try anyway and make it worse.
- B. Say you can't and suggest who might.
- C. Say you'll do it later and never do it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these leaves them stuck for longest?

WORTH KNOWING

Saying "I can't do that one" early is far more useful than a vague yes.

77 What if you knock into someone?

Corridor. Shoulder. They've dropped everything.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep walking.
- B. Stop, apologise, help pick it up.
- C. Say they walked into you.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If they were already having a bad day, which option are they still thinking about at four o'clock?

WORTH KNOWING

Ten seconds of helping cancels the whole thing out. Walking on turns an accident into an insult.

78 What if you're completely stuck?

You've read it four times. Nothing's happening.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stare at it and look busy.
- B. Ask for help.
- C. Do a different bit and come back.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much of the lesson does option A use up?

WORTH KNOWING

Asking early looks like effort. Asking at the end looks like you weren't working.

79 What if your plan falls apart?

The whole thing depended on one bit. That bit's gone.

YOU COULD...

- A. Give up on it.
- B. Work out what still works and rebuild around it.
- C. Blame whoever broke it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which parts of the plan are actually unaffected?

WORTH KNOWING

Most collapsed plans are only about 20% broken. It just feels total in the first ten minutes.

80 What if you're caught doing something you shouldn't?

Mid-act. No plausible explanation available.

YOU COULD...

- A. Deny it.
- B. Own it immediately.
- C. Say everyone else was doing it too.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How does the adult's reaction change between A and B?

WORTH KNOWING

Being caught is one problem. Lying about being caught is a second, larger one — and it's the one adults punish.

SECTION FIVE

Fairness and Speaking Up

SITUATIONS 81-100

81 What if you disagree with your teacher?

You think they've got it wrong. In front of everyone.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say so, in the middle of the lesson, firmly.
- B. Ask a question about it rather than contradicting.
- C. Speak to them afterwards.
- D. Say nothing.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option is most likely to end with the record being corrected?

WORTH KNOWING

"Can I check something — I thought it was this?" gets you taken seriously. "That's wrong" gets you a different conversation entirely.

82 What if you think a rule is unfair?

Everyone has to. You think everyone shouldn't have to.

YOU COULD...

- A. Break it and see what happens.
- B. Ask what the rule is for.
- C. Complain about it to other children only.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these has any chance of changing the rule?

WORTH KNOWING

Rules that seem pointless usually have a story behind them. Sometimes the story has expired — but you need to know it before you can argue with it.

83 What if you're told off for something you didn't do?

The adult is certain. You're certain the other way.

YOU COULD...

- A. Argue back immediately.
- B. Take it now and ask to speak to them afterwards.
- C. Sulk visibly.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which conversation goes better — the one in front of thirty people, or the one at the end?

WORTH KNOWING

Adults find it much easier to change their mind in private. Not because they're stubborn — because backing down publicly costs them the room.

84 What if someone takes credit for your work?

Your idea. Their name on it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Announce it loudly to everyone.
- B. Tell the adult in charge, calmly and factually.
- C. Let it go and remember.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What evidence do you actually have? Does that change which option works?

WORTH KNOWING

Facts, said calmly, land better than outrage. "I did the first draft — here it is on my laptop" beats "that's mine!"

85 What if you're given a job nobody else has to do?

Every time. Somehow always you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it and say nothing.
- B. Ask, politely, whether it could be shared.
- C. Refuse.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you never mention it, does anyone realise it's always been you?

WORTH KNOWING

Adults hand out jobs to whoever they trust and whoever's nearest. They very rarely keep count. Pointing it out once is usually enough.

86 What if you see someone cheating?

Test, game, competition. You definitely saw it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say nothing.
- B. Tell them you saw.
- C. Tell an adult.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does it change your answer if they're winning something someone else deserves?

WORTH KNOWING

Cheating in a playground game and cheating in an exam sit in very different places. The size of the consequence should match the size of the thing.

87 What if you see someone being picked on?

It's happening. You're nearby. Others are watching too.

YOU COULD...

- A. Join in so you're not next.
- B. Get an adult.
- C. Go and stand with the person being picked on.
- D. Walk away.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If everyone watching picks D, what happens? And if two people pick C?

WORTH KNOWING

Standing next to someone is powerful and doesn't require you to say a word or confront anyone. It's the safest brave option there is.

FOR AN ADULT TO READ FIRST

88 What if a friend asks you not to tell?

They've told you something. They've made you promise.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep the promise no matter what.
- B. Tell them you'll have to tell an adult if they're not safe.
- C. Tell an adult straight away.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's the worst thing that happens if you keep quiet and you were wrong to?

WORTH KNOWING

Some secrets are safe to keep. Anything involving someone being hurt, unsafe, or frightened is not a secret — it's a thing an adult needs to know, even if your friend is angry with you for a while.

89 What if you need help but don't want to ask?

Asking feels like admitting something.

YOU COULD...

- A. Struggle on.
- B. Ask a friend first.
- C. Ask the adult.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much time does option A cost you before you end up asking anyway?

WORTH KNOWING

Nobody has ever been thought less of for asking a question early. Plenty have been for handing in nothing.

90 What if an adult has got something wrong about you?

They think you're the sort of person who does a thing you don't do.

YOU COULD...

- A. Live with it.
- B. Ask to talk to them and say what's actually true.
- C. Behave badly since they think that anyway.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Where does option C end up in a month?

WORTH KNOWING

Reputations are stickier than they should be — but they do move, slowly, with evidence.

91 What if you're interrupted every time you speak?

You start. Someone else finishes.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stop trying.
- B. Say "I hadn't finished" and carry on.
- C. Interrupt them back.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does option B get easier or harder the second time you use it?

WORTH KNOWING

"I hadn't finished" is polite, short, and works. Most interrupters aren't being cruel — they're just faster.

92 What if nobody listens to your idea?

You said it. It sank. Someone said it again ten minutes later and everyone loved it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say you said that first.
- B. Say “yes — that’s what I meant earlier, and I’d add this.”
- C. Say nothing and be annoyed.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these gets you back into the conversation rather than out of it?

WORTH KNOWING

Adding something to your own idea is a neat way of reclaiming it without making anyone the villain.

93 What if you’re the only one who disagrees?

Everyone else has landed on the same answer. You haven’t.

YOU COULD...

- A. Go along with it.
- B. Say what you think and why.
- C. Say nothing and refuse to take part.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you turn out to be right and you said nothing, how do you feel?

WORTH KNOWING

Being the only one who disagrees is uncomfortable and occasionally very valuable. Give the reason, not just the disagreement.

94 What if someone always speaks for you?

They answer questions aimed at you. They explain what you meant.

YOU COULD...

- A. Let them.
- B. Tell them privately you’d like to answer yourself.
- C. Contradict them publicly.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Are they doing it to help or to take over? Does that change your answer?

WORTH KNOWING

A lot of speaking-for-you is well-meant. It’s still worth stopping — people can’t get to know you through a translator.

95 What if you're told "because I said so"?

Conversation over. No reason given.

YOU COULD...

- A. Push for a reason immediately.
- B. Accept it now and ask calmly later.
- C. Do it badly on purpose.

PLAY IT FORWARD

When is an adult most likely to explain properly — mid-rush, or afterwards?

WORTH KNOWING

"Because I said so" usually means busy, not unreasonable. Ask again at a quiet moment and you'll often get the real answer.

96 What if you want to change a rule at home?

Bedtime. Screens. Whose turn it is.

YOU COULD...

- A. Complain about it repeatedly.
- B. Ask for a proper conversation and bring a suggestion.
- C. Ignore the rule.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one would work on you, if you were the one making the rules?

WORTH KNOWING

Come with a proposal rather than a protest. "Could we try 9pm on Fridays and see how it goes?" gets a far better hearing.

97 What if you're asked to do something you think is wrong?

By a friend, an older child, or anyone else.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it to avoid the argument.
- B. Say no.
- C. Say no and tell someone.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Who ends up in trouble if it goes wrong — the person who asked, or the person who did it?

WORTH KNOWING

"No" is a complete sentence. You don't owe anyone a reason for refusing to do something that feels wrong.

98 What if someone makes a joke about you and says it's just a joke?

Everyone laughed. You didn't.

YOU COULD...

- A. Laugh along.
- B. Say you'd rather they didn't.
- C. Make a sharper joke about them.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you laugh, how do they know to stop?

WORTH KNOWING

"That one's not funny to me" said flatly, once, works surprisingly often. Jokes need an audience — including you.

99 What if you're praised for something you didn't do?

The credit's landed on you. It belongs to someone else.

YOU COULD...

- A. Accept it quietly.
- B. Say who actually did it.
- C. Say nothing now, tell the person later.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How does the real person feel watching option A?

WORTH KNOWING

Handing credit back in public is one of the quickest ways to be trusted. People notice it far more than they notice the achievement.

100 What if you want to say no to a grown-up?

Not a rude no. A "I don't want to do that" no.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say yes and resent it.
- B. Say what you'd prefer and why.
- C. Refuse flatly.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these leaves the adult able to say yes to you?

WORTH KNOWING

You can disagree with an adult respectfully — most will listen. And if something ever feels genuinely unsafe or wrong, you don't need permission to say no or to walk away and tell someone.

SECTION SIX

Other People's Feelings

SITUATIONS 101-120

101 What if someone is crying?

Someone you know. Right there. Crying.

YOU COULD...

- A. Walk past — they probably want privacy.
- B. Ask if they're alright.
- C. Sit nearby without saying anything.
- D. Get an adult.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What if they say "go away"? Does that mean go far away, or go two metres away?

WORTH KNOWING

You don't need the right words. Staying nearby does most of the work on its own.

102 What if someone you don't know is crying?

A child from another year. A stranger on a bench.

YOU COULD...

- A. Ignore it.
- B. Ask if they need someone.
- C. Find an adult and say where they are.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these helps most if it's serious — and does least harm if it isn't?

WORTH KNOWING

With people you don't know, fetching an adult is nearly always the strongest move. You're not being a telltale. You're being useful.

103 What if a friend says nothing's wrong but something obviously is?

Everything about them says otherwise.

YOU COULD...

- A. Take them at their word.
- B. Say you don't believe them.
- C. Say you're around later if they change their mind.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one makes it easiest for them to come back to you at 3pm?

WORTH KNOWING

People often say "nothing" because they're not ready, not because they don't want you. Leave the door open rather than pushing it.

104 What if someone's pet has died?

They've just told you. You've no idea what to say.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say you're sorry and ask about the pet.
- B. Say at least they can get a new one.
- C. Change the subject to spare them.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How does option B land on someone who's just lost something they loved?

WORTH KNOWING

"What were they like?" is a wonderful question. Grieving people usually want to talk about the one they've lost, not the next one.

105 What if someone tells you something sad and you don't know what to say?

The silence is stretching. You're searching for something useful.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say "I don't know what to say, but I'm glad you told me."
- B. Offer advice.
- C. Tell them about something sad that happened to you.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option keeps the focus on them?

WORTH KNOWING

Not knowing what to say is normal, and saying so is a perfectly good thing to say.

106 What if your friend is furious with someone else?

They want you angry too.

YOU COULD...

- A. Agree with everything to keep the peace.
- B. Listen, then ask what they want to do about it.
- C. Defend the other person.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If they make up tomorrow, which option leaves you holding things you said?

WORTH KNOWING

Being on someone's side doesn't mean joining the war. Listening is usually what they actually wanted.

107 What if someone is scared of something you're not?

Heights. Spiders. Speaking in front of people.

YOU COULD...

- A. Tell them it's nothing to be scared of.
- B. Say you'll stay with them.
- C. Make it worse for a laugh.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Has "it's nothing to be scared of" ever worked on you?

WORTH KNOWING

Fear doesn't respond to logic from other people. It responds to company.

108 What if someone is being left out?

Not bullied. Just... never included.

YOU COULD...

- A. Assume someone else will sort it.
- B. Ask them to join what you're doing.
- C. Feel sorry for them and do nothing.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How many people are picking option A right now?

WORTH KNOWING

One invitation from one person changes a whole break time. It rarely costs the inviter anything.

109 What if someone is being really annoying?

Every day. In the same way.

YOU COULD...

- A. Tell them to go away.
- B. Say what specifically is bothering you.
- C. Wonder what they're actually after.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If someone is annoying because they want attention, what does "go away" teach them to do next?

WORTH KNOWING

A lot of annoying behaviour is a badly aimed attempt at friendship. Not all of it. But more than you'd think.

110 What if a friend gets bad news?

Something has happened at home. They've just told you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Treat them exactly as normal.
- B. Ask how they are, once, and then be normal.
- C. Ask about it constantly.

PLAY IT FORWARD

After a week, what would you want if it were you?

WORTH KNOWING

Most people want to be asked once and then treated ordinarily. Ordinary is a rest.

111 What if someone's parents have split up?

They've mentioned it. They're not making a thing of it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Ask lots of questions.
- B. Say that sounds hard and let them lead.
- C. Tell other people.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Who gets to decide who else knows?

WORTH KNOWING

It's their news. Passing it on, even sympathetically, takes something that wasn't yours.

112 What if someone is embarrassed?

They've just done something in front of everyone.

YOU COULD...

- A. Join in the laughing.
- B. Move the attention on to something else.
- C. Tell them it was fine, loudly.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does option C extend the moment or end it?

WORTH KNOWING

Changing the subject is the single kindest thing you can do for an embarrassed person. Kinder than sympathy.

113 What if someone's proud of something you find boring?

They're going on about it. At length.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say you're not interested.
- B. Give them two minutes and ask one real question.
- C. Pretend to care for twenty minutes.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much does two minutes cost you? How much is it worth to them?

WORTH KNOWING

You don't have to find the thing interesting. Finding the *person* interesting is enough.

114 What if someone needs help but insists they don't?

They're struggling. They've said they're fine twice.

YOU COULD...

- A. Take over anyway.
- B. Offer once, specifically, and then leave it.
- C. Watch them struggle.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does option A take away from them?

WORTH KNOWING

Offering a specific thing — “want me to hold that end?” — is much easier to accept than a general “do you need help?”

115 What if someone keeps apologising for everything?

Sorry for existing. Sorry for the weather.

YOU COULD...

- A. Point out how much they say sorry.
- B. Tell them there's nothing to apologise for, and mean it.
- C. Ignore it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does option A make them more or less likely to apologise?

WORTH KNOWING

People who over-apologise are usually worried about being a nuisance. Being easy to be around helps more than pointing it out.

116 What if someone's nervous about something you find easy?

They're dreading it. You don't understand why.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say how easy it is.
- B. Ask what the worst bit is.
- C. Do it for them.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How does "it's easy" sound to someone who's finding it hard?

WORTH KNOWING

"Easy" is a comparison, and comparisons don't help. "What's the bit you're dreading?" does.

117 What if you've hurt someone's feelings without meaning to?

You've just seen their face.

YOU COULD...

- A. Explain you didn't mean it that way.
- B. Apologise for the effect, then explain.
- C. Say they're being oversensitive.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which order matters more to them — the apology first, or the explanation first?

WORTH KNOWING

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean that how it sounded" does both jobs in one sentence and in the right order.

118 What if someone is having a very big feeling in public?

Shouting, crying, on the floor. People are staring.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stare too.
- B. Look away and give them space.
- C. Move the audience on if you can.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does having an audience do to a big feeling?

WORTH KNOWING

Big feelings settle faster with fewer eyes on them. Not watching is a genuinely kind act.

119 What if someone you know is ill or in hospital?

You want to do something. You don't know what.

YOU COULD...

- A. Wait until they're better.
- B. Send a short message about something ordinary.
- C. Ask lots of questions about the illness.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What would you most want to hear about if you were stuck in a bed all week?

WORTH KNOWING

Ordinary news is a gift to someone who's out of circulation. Tell them what happened in maths.

120 What if someone has been quiet all week?

Not upset exactly. Just... gone quiet.

YOU COULD...

- A. Assume they want to be left alone.
- B. Sit with them and talk about anything.
- C. Ask directly if they're okay.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's the cost of asking if nothing's wrong? What's the cost of not asking if something is?

WORTH KNOWING

The cost of asking is a slightly awkward moment. It's almost always worth paying.

SECTION SEVEN

Truth, Trust and Tricky Choices

SITUATIONS 121-140

121 What if you're asked to keep a secret that worries you?

They've told you something. You've been sworn to silence. You feel sick about it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep it.
- B. Tell them you can't keep this one, and why.
- C. Tell a trusted adult.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What would you say to yourself in a month if something happened and you'd said nothing?

WORTH KNOWING

If a secret is about someone being hurt, unsafe, or frightened, telling an adult is the right call — even if you promised, and even if it makes your friend angry.

122 What if someone dares you?

Everyone's watching. It's supposed to be funny.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it.
- B. Say no.
- C. Dare them back.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Who's taking the risk in a dare? Who's getting the entertainment?

WORTH KNOWING

Dares work by making "no" feel expensive. It isn't. It's over in five seconds.

123 What if everyone's doing something you don't want to do?

You're the only one hesitating. They've noticed.

YOU COULD...

- A. Join in.
- B. Say it's not for you and stay.
- C. Leave.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How many of them are also secretly unsure? What happens if one person says so?

WORTH KNOWING

Groups do things no individual in them would choose. Being the first to say "I'm not doing that" often releases three others.

124 What if you told a small lie and it's grown?

One little thing. Now it needs three more lies to stay standing.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep adding.
- B. Come clean now.
- C. Wait for it to collapse.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How many people are involved by next week? How much bigger is the apology?

WORTH KNOWING

Lies need maintenance. The cost never goes down — only the amount you've already invested goes up.

125 What if someone asks "do you like it?" and you don't?

The haircut. The drawing. The present they made.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say you love it.
- B. Find the true bit and say that.
- C. Say exactly what you think.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What are they actually asking for — a review, or reassurance?

WORTH KNOWING

There's almost always something true and kind available. "You've put loads of work into that" is honest and it's enough.

126 What if you find money?

On the floor. No one nearby.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep it.
- B. Hand it in.
- C. Ask around first.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does it change your answer if it's 20p? If it's £50? Where's your line, and why is it there?

WORTH KNOWING

In shops and schools there's usually a proper place for lost money. Handing it in takes about a minute.

127 What if you find something that isn't yours?

A phone. A wallet. Someone's homework.

YOU COULD...

- A. Look through it to find out whose it is.
- B. Hand it straight to an adult.
- C. Leave it where it is.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How would you feel about a stranger going through yours, even helpfully?

WORTH KNOWING

Handing it in intact is always the clean answer. It removes any question about what you did with it.

128 What if you're offered something that isn't theirs to give?

"Take one, they'll never notice."

YOU COULD...

- A. Take it.
- B. Say no.
- C. Say no and not take part in the rest of it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If it's discovered, who's standing nearby in the story?

WORTH KNOWING

Being present is often treated as being involved. Leaving is a legitimate move.

129 What if someone asks you to lie for them?

Just say they were with you. Just this once.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it.
- B. Say you'll stay quiet but won't lie.
- C. Refuse and say why.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What happens to you if it unravels? Who takes the blame — them, or the person who backed the story?

WORTH KNOWING

A friend who asks you to lie is asking you to take a risk they've decided not to take alone.

130 What if you're tempted to cheat on a test?

The answer's right there. You could see it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Look.
- B. Don't look and accept the mark you get.
- C. Look and feel bad afterwards.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does a mark tell your teacher if it isn't yours — and what do they teach you next based on it?

WORTH KNOWING

Cheated marks lead to work pitched at a level you can't do. The problem arrives later, and larger.

131 What if someone shows you something you shouldn't see?

On a screen, usually. Before you can look away.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pretend it's fine.
- B. Say you don't want to see it and move away.
- C. Tell an adult.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If it bothers you tonight, who would you want to have told?

WORTH KNOWING

You will never be in trouble for telling an adult that someone showed you something upsetting. That's a promise worth holding on to.

132 What if a friend's mistake needs an adult to know?

They've done something and it's getting worse. They've asked you not to say.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep quiet.
- B. Push them to tell someone, and offer to go with them.
- C. Tell an adult yourself.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option is most likely to keep the friendship *and* fix the problem?

WORTH KNOWING

Going with someone while they own up is one of the most genuinely loyal things you can do.

133 What if you've promised two people opposite things?

Both are expecting you. Both think it's settled.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pick one and avoid the other.
- B. Tell both the truth now.
- C. Cancel both.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option is worse for them — a change of plan today, or being let down on the day?

WORTH KNOWING

Double-booking is a mistake, not a crime. Handling it badly is what turns it into one.

134 What if someone's only nice to you when they want something?

Friendly on Monday. Needs a favour. Gone by Wednesday.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep helping and hope it changes.
- B. Help sometimes and notice the pattern.
- C. Say what you've noticed.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's happened the last three times? Does that predict the fourth?

WORTH KNOWING

Patterns are more honest than promises. Watch what people do over a month, not what they say on Monday.

135 What if someone older asks you to do something that feels odd?

You can't explain why. It just feels off.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it because they're older.
- B. Say no and leave.
- C. Tell an adult at home the same day.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's the cost of telling if it turns out to be nothing?

WORTH KNOWING

That "off" feeling is worth trusting. No adult or older child should ever ask you to keep secrets from your parents or carers — and telling is never overreacting.

136 What if you break a rule and nobody notices?

Got away with it entirely.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it again.
- B. Stop, quietly.
- C. Tell someone.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What kind of person are you when nobody's checking? That's the question, really.

WORTH KNOWING

Getting away with something once teaches your brain that the rule is optional. That's the actual risk — not the punishment.

137 What if you're asked "who did it?" and you know?

Everyone's silent. You've got the answer.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say nothing.
- B. Say who it was.
- C. Talk to the person first and give them a chance to own up.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does it change your answer if someone innocent is about to be punished?

WORTH KNOWING

There's a real difference between telling tales to get someone in trouble and telling the truth to get someone out of it.

138 What if someone tells you a rumour?

Juicy. Probably not true. Definitely about someone you know.

YOU COULD...

- A. Pass it on.
- B. Ask how they know.
- C. Say you'd rather not hear it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If it reaches the person it's about, how many people will have had a chance to stop it?

WORTH KNOWING

"How do you know that?" stops most rumours dead. Very few survive the question.

139 What if you're asked to rank your friends?

Who's your best? Who's second?

YOU COULD...

- A. Answer.
- B. Refuse.
- C. Give a joke answer.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Where does that list end up? Who hears it by Friday?

WORTH KNOWING

Ranking games exist to cause trouble. There's no version of the answer that doesn't hurt someone.

140 What if you told the truth and it went badly?

You did the right thing. It cost you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Decide honesty isn't worth it.
- B. Accept that it cost something and that it was still right.
- C. Blame the person you told the truth to.

PLAY IT FORWARD

In a year, which decision do you want to have made?

WORTH KNOWING

Doing the right thing doesn't guarantee a good outcome. It only guarantees you don't have to carry the other thing around.

SECTION EIGHT

School and Learning

SITUATIONS 141-160

141 What if you don't understand and everyone else does?

They're all nodding. You've been lost since the second slide.

YOU COULD...

- A. Nod along.
- B. Ask.
- C. Ask a friend afterwards.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What happens next lesson, which builds on this one?

WORTH KNOWING

At least four other people are also lost. The first person to ask is doing the whole room a favour.

142 What if you have to read out loud?

Your turn is coming. You can count the paragraphs.

YOU COULD...

- A. Read ahead and practise your bit.
- B. Panic quietly.
- C. Tell the teacher beforehand that you find it hard.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these gives the teacher any chance to help?

WORTH KNOWING

Most teachers will adjust — a shorter piece, a warning, a pass — if they know in advance. They can't do anything about a panic they didn't see coming.

143 What if you have to present in front of the class?

Standing up. Everyone facing you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Read every word off the page.
- B. Know your first sentence by heart and use notes for the rest.
- C. Wing it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which part is scariest — the start, the middle, or the end? What does that tell you about what to practise?

WORTH KNOWING

If the first sentence is solid, the rest usually follows. Nerves are worst in the ten seconds before you start talking.

144 What if you've forgotten your homework at home?

Done. Just not here.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say the dog ate it.
- B. Say exactly what happened at the start of the lesson.
- C. Say nothing.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one leaves your word worth something next time?

WORTH KNOWING

Teachers keep a rough mental record of who's honest about this stuff. It's worth more than one missed homework.

145 What if you didn't do the homework at all?

No excuse. Just didn't.

YOU COULD...

- A. Invent a reason.
- B. Say you didn't do it and ask when you can hand it in.
- C. Copy someone's in the corridor.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How does option C go if the teacher reads them side by side?

WORTH KNOWING

Owning it and offering a date turns a telling-off into a plan. That's a much better conversation.

146 What if you get a mark you're disappointed with?

Lower than you hoped. Possibly much lower.

YOU COULD...

- A. Hide it.
- B. Look at what went wrong.
- C. Decide you're rubbish at the subject.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these changes the next mark?

WORTH KNOWING

One bad mark is data, not a verdict. The useful question is always "which bits?" — never "am I any good at this?"

147 What if you did brilliantly and your friend didn't?

You're delighted. They're gutted.

YOU COULD...

- A. Announce yours.
- B. Keep it quiet around them today.
- C. Pretend yours was bad too.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does option C help them, or does it just make them feel patronised if they find out?

WORTH KNOWING

You can be pleased and considerate simultaneously. Celebrate somewhere else, with someone else, today.

148 What if you finish early?

Done. Fifteen minutes left. Everyone else still working.

YOU COULD...

- A. Distract other people.
- B. Check your work properly.
- C. Ask for something else to do.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much do you find when you actually reread it?

WORTH KNOWING

“Finished early” and “finished well” are different things about 80% of the time.

149 What if you can’t start?

Blank page. Blank head. Twenty minutes gone.

YOU COULD...

- A. Wait for it to come.
- B. Write the worst possible first sentence and fix it later.
- C. Ask for the first step.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which is easier — starting from nothing, or improving something bad?

WORTH KNOWING

A rubbish first sentence is the fastest known cure for a blank page. You can always delete it.

150 What if your partner does none of the group work?

You’ve done the lot. Their name’s on it too.

YOU COULD...

- A. Do it all and say nothing.
- B. Ask them to take one specific part.
- C. Tell the teacher.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option gives them a chance to fix it before it becomes a complaint?

WORTH KNOWING

Asking for a specific job — “can you do the diagram?” — works far better than asking someone to “help more”.

151 What if you're put with someone you don't like?

Assigned. No say in it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Refuse.
- B. Get on with the work and keep it professional.
- C. Do it badly to make a point.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Who does option C actually punish, when the mark comes back?

WORTH KNOWING

Working well with people you don't much like is a proper skill. Nearly every adult uses it weekly.

152 What if you're moved away from your friends?

New seat. Other side of the room.

YOU COULD...

- A. Argue about it.
- B. Try it for a fortnight.
- C. Behave badly until you're moved back.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Where does option C get you moved to next?

WORTH KNOWING

Seating plans get reviewed. Being easy to teach is the fastest route back to where you'd like to sit.

153 What if you need the toilet and don't want to ask?

You're not going to be able to concentrate on anything else.

YOU COULD...

- A. Wait it out.
- B. Ask.
- C. Ask at the quietest moment you can find.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much of the lesson do you take in while you're waiting it out?

WORTH KNOWING

Every teacher has been asked this thousands of times. It is the least interesting thing you will say all day.

154 What if there's a supply teacher and everything's different?

Different voice. Different rules. Different order.

YOU COULD...

- A. Take advantage of it.
- B. Tell them how the class normally does it.
- C. Struggle silently with the change.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option makes the lesson shorter and calmer — for you as much as for them?

WORTH KNOWING

Supply teachers are usually grateful for one honest child who explains the routine. It's a genuinely useful job to take on.

155 What if you're asked a question and your mind goes blank?

Everyone waiting. Nothing there.

YOU COULD...

- A. Guess wildly.
- B. Say "can you come back to me?"
- C. Sit in silence.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one gets the attention off you fastest and keeps you in the lesson?

WORTH KNOWING

"Come back to me" is a normal, professional thing to say. Adults use it in meetings constantly.

156 What if you keep making the same mistake?

Third time. Same error. Same red pen.

YOU COULD...

- A. Feel bad about it.
- B. Write down the rule and check for it deliberately.
- C. Decide it doesn't matter.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one is still working for you in a month?

WORTH KNOWING

Repeated mistakes are usually one missing rule, not a general failing. Find the rule and the whole category improves.

157 What if writing is the bit you dread?

The spelling. The handwriting. The gap between what's in your head and what's on the page.

YOU COULD...

- A. Write as little as possible.
- B. Get the ideas down first and fix the surface later.
- C. Ask what help is available.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you write less to hide the spelling, who ends up not seeing your ideas?

WORTH KNOWING

Ideas and spelling are separate jobs, and doing them at the same time makes both harder. Splitting them is a legitimate technique, not a shortcut.

158 What if the work's too easy and you're bored?

You finished the idea ten minutes ago.

YOU COULD...

- A. Mess about.
- B. Ask for something harder.
- C. Do it slowly to fill the time.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one gets you more interesting work next lesson?

WORTH KNOWING

Teachers rarely know you're under-stretched unless you ask. Asking is not arrogance.

159 What if you're praised in front of everyone and you hate it?

Held up as an example. All eyes on you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Suffer through it.
- B. Say thank you and let it pass.
- C. Mention privately that you'd rather be praised quietly.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Would the teacher change what they do if they knew?

WORTH KNOWING

Most teachers are pleased to be told. They're trying to be kind and they've no way of knowing it lands badly.

160 What if there's a test tomorrow and you can't sleep?

It's 11pm. Your brain is running the whole thing on repeat.

YOU COULD...

- A. Get up and revise more.
- B. Accept that you know what you know and rest.
- C. Lie there worrying.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which does more for tomorrow's performance — an extra hour of panicky revision, or an extra hour of sleep?

WORTH KNOWING

Tired brains recall less than rested ones. At 11pm, sleep is usually the higher-value revision.

SECTION NINE

Home and Family

SITUATIONS 161-180

161 What if your brother or sister goes in your room?

Without asking. Again.

YOU COULD...

- A. Go in theirs to make the point.
- B. Ask them to knock, and ask an adult to back it up.
- C. Shout.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Where does the tit-for-tat version of this end up by the weekend?

WORTH KNOWING

Household rules stick better when they apply both ways. Ask for the rule, not just the apology.

162 What if your sibling breaks something of yours?

They didn't mean to. It doesn't help.

YOU COULD...

- A. Break something of theirs.
- B. Be angry, then work out what happens about replacing it.
- C. Say it's fine and stay furious.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option gets you closest to actually having the thing again?

WORTH KNOWING

You're allowed to be angry about it and still not want a war. Those are separate decisions.

163 What if you're blamed for something your sibling did?

The adult has decided. You're the one in trouble.

YOU COULD...

- A. Shout that it's not fair.
- B. Say calmly what happened, once.
- C. Take it and hold a grudge.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which version is an adult most likely to reconsider later, in the quiet?

WORTH KNOWING

Being calm when you're falsely accused is horrible and it's persuasive. Volume reads as guilt to most adults, unfairly.

164 What if your parents are arguing?

Voices through the wall. You can hear the shape of it, not the words.

YOU COULD...

- A. Try to stop it.
- B. Go somewhere else in the house and do something.
- C. Tell someone you trust that it's happening a lot.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Is this an ordinary argument, or something that keeps happening and frightens you? Do those need different answers?

WORTH KNOWING

Adults arguing isn't your job to fix and isn't your fault. If it's frequent or scary, telling a trusted adult outside the house is the right move.

165 What if you're asked to do a job right when you're busy?

Mid-game. Mid-thing. Mid-anything.

YOU COULD...

- A. Ignore it.
- B. Say you'll do it in ten minutes and actually do it.
- C. Do it badly and fast.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How many times can you use option B before it stops being believed?

WORTH KNOWING

Naming a time and hitting it buys you a lot of freedom. Missing it costs you all of it.

166 What if screen time ends in the middle of a game?

You're mid-round. Others are relying on you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Ignore the warning and keep going.
- B. Ask for two minutes to finish the round, in advance.
- C. Argue about it every single time.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option makes tomorrow's negotiation easier?

WORTH KNOWING

Asking before the deadline works. Asking after it looks like you're stalling — even when you're not.

167 What if you want something everyone else seems to have?

You've asked. The answer was no.

YOU COULD...

- A. Ask again daily.
- B. Ask once properly, with a reason, and accept the answer.
- C. Sulk.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does asking daily change the reason behind the no?

WORTH KNOWING

Money reasons don't respond to persistence. If that's the reason, asking again just makes everyone feel worse.

168 What if there's a family plan you don't want to be part of?

The whole day. Somewhere you don't want to go.

YOU COULD...

- A. Go and be miserable at everyone.
- B. Say how you feel, then go and make the best of it.
- C. Refuse.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Who else's day does option A affect?

WORTH KNOWING

Being outvoted happens. Being outvoted and ruining it for everyone is a separate decision you get to make.

169 What if a grandparent is unwell?

The adults are talking quietly and stopping when you come in.

YOU COULD...

- A. Not ask.
- B. Ask what's happening and say you'd rather know.
- C. Imagine the worst.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which is harder — a difficult fact, or not knowing?

WORTH KNOWING

Most adults will tell you more if you ask directly. They're often protecting you from something you've already half-guessed.

170 What if you have to tell your parents something bad?

A broken thing. A school letter. Something you did.

YOU COULD...

- A. Wait until they find out.
- B. Tell them at a calm moment, straight out.
- C. Tell them in the car, so it's harder to react.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How does the reaction differ between "I need to tell you something" and "why didn't you say?"

WORTH KNOWING

Volunteering bad news reliably reduces the size of the reaction. Adults notice courage.

171 What if you disagree with a family rule?

You think it's out of date. They think it's fine.

YOU COULD...

- A. Break it quietly.
- B. Ask for a review and suggest a trial.
- C. Argue about it every time it comes up.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which of these has ever changed a rule in your house?

WORTH KNOWING

"Can we try it my way for two weeks?" is much easier to say yes to than "the rule is stupid."

172 What if you're compared to your brother or sister?

Constantly. Usually unfavourably.

YOU COULD...

- A. Compete.
- B. Say how it feels to be compared.
- C. Give up on the thing entirely.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Do the adults know they're doing it? Do you know that they know?

WORTH KNOWING

Most comparing is thoughtless rather than deliberate. Saying "I'd rather not be measured against them" often stops it.

173 What if the house is noisy and you need quiet?

Television, siblings, someone on a call. And you need to think.

YOU COULD...

- A. Shout at everyone to be quiet.
- B. Find somewhere else in the house.
- C. Ask for a quiet half-hour and say why.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which one gets you quiet tomorrow as well as today?

WORTH KNOWING

Asking for a specific length of time works better than asking for silence in general. Half an hour is a request; "be quiet" is a demand.

174 What if there's a guest at home you don't know?

A relative you've met twice. A friend of the family.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stay in your room the whole time.
- B. Say hello, stay for ten minutes, then go.
- C. Be visibly bored.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's the smallest amount of effort that counts as polite? Is it more or less than you thought?

WORTH KNOWING

Ten minutes and one question is usually the entire social requirement. Then you're free.

175 What if you overhear something you weren't meant to?

Through a door. Not for you.

YOU COULD...

- A. Keep listening.
- B. Move away and, if it worries you, ask about it later.
- C. Tell someone else what you heard.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If it's about you, is asking directly better or worse than guessing for a week?

WORTH KNOWING

Half-heard things get worse in your head. Asking straight out is nearly always less painful than the version you'll invent.

176 What if a parent is stressed?

Short answers. Tight face. Everything's a bit sharp today.

YOU COULD...

- A. Take it personally.
- B. Give them some room and ask later if they're alright.
- C. Add to it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Would you want to be asked "are you okay?" when you're like that — or given ten minutes first?

WORTH KNOWING

Adults have bad days for reasons that have nothing to do with you. It's rarely about the thing they snapped about.

177 What if you want to be alone and your family wants together time?

They've planned something. You want your own space.

YOU COULD...

- A. Refuse.
- B. Do some of it, and ask for time on your own afterwards.
- C. Join in resentfully.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Which option means you get asked again next time?

WORTH KNOWING

Needing time alone is a real need, not rudeness. Say it as a need rather than a rejection and it usually lands fine.

178 What if someone new joins your family?

A new partner. A step-sibling. A baby.

YOU COULD...

- A. Refuse to accept it.
- B. Give it time and say honestly how you're finding it.
- C. Pretend to be delighted.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How do you feel in six months if you've said nothing at all about it?

WORTH KNOWING

You can be perfectly polite to someone new and still be finding it hard. Both are allowed to be true, and saying so helps.

179 What if you're moving house?

New room. New area. Possibly new school.

YOU COULD...

- A. Refuse to engage with any of it.
- B. Ask what you get a say in.
- C. Focus only on what you're losing.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What can you actually influence — the move, or how the room looks and who you stay in touch with?

WORTH KNOWING

Control over small things helps enormously when the big thing isn't yours to decide.

180 What if you feel different from the rest of your family?

Different interests. Different pace. Different everything, some days.

YOU COULD...

- A. Hide it.
- B. Find one person who gets that bit of you.
- C. Decide you don't belong.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Does being different from your family mean being separate from them?

WORTH KNOWING

Almost everyone feels this at some point. It usually means you're becoming yourself, not that you've landed in the wrong house.

SECTION TEN

Out in the World and Online

SITUATIONS 181–201

181 What if you send a message to the wrong person?

Sent. To them. About them.

YOU COULD...

- A. Delete it and hope they didn't see.
- B. Say straight away that it was meant for someone else and you're sorry.
- C. Claim you were hacked.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Deleting leaves a "message deleted" mark. What does that tell them?

WORTH KNOWING

Getting to it first is the only real damage control. The apology gets much harder once they've had an hour to reread it.

182 What if someone screenshots what you said?

A private message. Now not private.

YOU COULD...

- A. Deny it.
- B. Own what you said if it was fair, apologise if it wasn't.
- C. Screenshot something of theirs.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Before you type anything, ask: would I be alright with this on a screen in front of thirty people?

WORTH KNOWING

Assume everything you send can be screenshotted, because it can. That's not paranoia, it's just how the technology works.

183 What if a group chat turns nasty?

It started as jokes. It isn't now.

YOU COULD...

- A. Join in.
- B. Say you're not up for this and leave the chat.
- C. Say nothing and stay.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If the chat gets shown to an adult, what does silence look like in the screenshots?

WORTH KNOWING

Leaving a chat is allowed and doesn't need a speech. One line and out.

184 What if you're left out of a group chat?

Everyone's in it. You found out by accident.

YOU COULD...

- A. Demand to be added.
- B. Ask one person about it.
- C. Assume the worst.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How often are group chats made deliberately, and how often do they just... happen?

WORTH KNOWING

A lot of chat exclusion is admin, not malice. Asking one person is quicker than three days of guessing.

185 What if your message is read and not replied to?

Two ticks. Nothing since.

YOU COULD...

- A. Send five more.
- B. Leave it and get on with your day.
- C. Send something passive-aggressive.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How many times have you read something and forgotten to reply?

WORTH KNOWING

Read receipts create a problem that didn't exist before them. Most non-replies are a distraction, not a message.

FOR AN ADULT TO READ FIRST

186 What if someone you don't know messages you?

Friendly. Interested in you. You've no idea who they are.

YOU COULD...

- A. Reply and find out more.
- B. Don't reply, and show an adult.
- C. Block them.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What could they learn about you from three friendly messages — your school, your area, your routine?

WORTH KNOWING

Adults and strangers online who want to talk privately to a young person are a warning sign, however nice they seem. Show someone. Every time.

187 What if someone asks you for a photo?

Of you. Maybe just a normal one. Maybe not.

YOU COULD...

- A. Send it.
- B. Say no.
- C. Say no and tell an adult who asked.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Once it's sent, who controls where it goes next?

WORTH KNOWING

Nobody who cares about you will pressure you for photos. If anyone asks for a private or personal picture, the answer is no and you tell an adult — you will not be in trouble.

188 What if you see something upsetting online?

You weren't looking for it. It's there now.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say nothing and try to forget it.
- B. Tell an adult what you saw.
- C. Show it to friends.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If it's still in your head at bedtime, what would have helped?

WORTH KNOWING

Telling an adult you've seen something upsetting is not confessing. You didn't do anything wrong by seeing it.

189 What if someone posts a picture of you that you hate?

Public. Tagged. Awful.

YOU COULD...

- A. Post something worse of them.
- B. Ask them to take it down.
- C. Say nothing and hope it disappears.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Do they know you mind? Would they take it down if they did?

WORTH KNOWING

Most people take a picture down when asked directly and privately. Making it public first makes them defensive.

190 What if someone rages at you in an online game?

Voice chat. Full volume. All your fault, apparently.

YOU COULD...

- A. Give it back.
- B. Mute them and carry on.
- C. Leave the game.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What does option A add to your evening?

WORTH KNOWING

The mute button is right there and costs you nothing. It's the most underused feature in gaming.

191 What if someone's cheating in a game?

Clearly. Obviously. Ruining it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Argue with them for an hour.
- B. Report them and move on.
- C. Cheat back.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much of your playing time does option A use up?

WORTH KNOWING

Games have reporting for exactly this. Using it takes ten seconds and works better than argument.

192 What if a game wants you to spend money?

One more pack. Just a couple of pounds. It's on a card that isn't yours.

YOU COULD...

- A. Buy it and sort it out later.
- B. Ask first, every time.
- C. Decide before you start how much, if anything, you'll spend.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How much would it add up to if you did it once a week for a year?

WORTH KNOWING

Games are designed by people whose actual job is making the next purchase feel small. Knowing that helps.

193 What if you get separated from your adult in a shop?

You turned round. They'd gone.

YOU COULD...

- A. Run around looking.
- B. Stay put for a minute, then find a staff member.
- C. Go outside to look.

PLAY IT FORWARD

If you're both moving, how likely are you to find each other?

WORTH KNOWING

Going outside is the one to avoid. Staff at the till are the fastest route back — they do this most weeks.

FOR AN ADULT TO READ FIRST

194 What if a stranger approaches you in the street?

Asking for help, or directions, or for you to come and look at something.

YOU COULD...

- A. Help them.
- B. Answer briefly from where you are, and don't go anywhere with them.
- C. Keep walking towards other people.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Why would an adult ask a child for help rather than another adult?

WORTH KNOWING

Adults who genuinely need help ask other adults. You never have to go anywhere with someone to help them, and walking away is never rude in that situation.

195 What if you see something that looks unsafe?

A fire. Someone hurt. Something wrong.

YOU COULD...

- A. Get involved.
- B. Find an adult immediately and say exactly where.
- C. Film it.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's the most useful thing you can give — help, or accurate information fast?

WORTH KNOWING

Being clear about *where* is the most valuable thing a young person can do in an emergency. Location first, then what you saw.

196 What if someone takes the seat you were about to sit in?

Bus. Train. Waiting room.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say it was yours.
- B. Find another seat.
- C. Stand next to them making a point.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How long is the journey? How long would the argument be?

WORTH KNOWING

Not every unfairness is worth spending energy on. Choosing which ones to care about is a real skill.

197 What if someone asks you for directions?

You're not sure. They're waiting.

YOU COULD...

- A. Guess confidently.
- B. Say you're not sure and point them at someone who might know.
- C. Pretend not to hear.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Where do they end up after a confident wrong answer?

WORTH KNOWING

"I'm not sure, sorry" is more helpful than a guess. Wrong directions cost people a lot more than no directions.

198 What if you're at a party and you don't know anyone?

Full room. Nobody familiar.

YOU COULD...

- A. Stand by the food and look at your phone.
- B. Find the person who also looks lost.
- C. Ask the host to introduce you to someone.

PLAY IT FORWARD

How many other people in that room are hoping someone talks to them first?

WORTH KNOWING

The other person standing alone is almost always relieved when you approach them. You're doing them a favour.

199 What if you're a guest and you don't like the food?

It's in front of you. They made it.

YOU COULD...

- A. Say you don't like it.
- B. Eat what you can and say thank you.
- C. Push it round the plate silently.

PLAY IT FORWARD

What's the difference between "I don't like this" and "I'm not very hungry, but thank you — this was kind of you"?

WORTH KNOWING

If something's a genuine allergy or a food you truly can't manage, say so early and clearly. That's different from just not fancying it.

FOR AN ADULT TO READ FIRST

200 What if someone you half-know offers you a lift?

A neighbour. A friend's older brother. Someone you've met but don't really know.

And Finally

Two hundred situations. You won't meet all of them. You'll meet plenty of them more than once.

Here's the thing this whole book is really about: almost nothing in it depends on being clever or brave or particularly good at people. It depends on one small habit — pausing long enough to ask *what happens next* before you do the first thing that comes into your head.

That pause is about two seconds long. It's the most useful two seconds you own.

And when you get it wrong, which you will, the second most useful thing in this book is a short sentence said early: **"I got that wrong. I'm sorry."**

That's it. That's the whole book.

Blank pages follow for the situations that aren't in here — the ones that happen to you. Write the situation at the top, three things you could do underneath, and what might happen next. Same as every other page.

YOU COULD...

- A. Accept — it's easier than walking.
- B. Say no thanks and carry on.
- C. Say you'll check with home first, and actually check.

PLAY IT FORWARD

Would the people at home know where you were, and who with?

WORTH KNOWING

The rule is simple and worth keeping for life: your adults know who you're travelling with, before you get in. Anyone who objects to you checking is exactly the person you should be checking about.

201 What if...?

YOU COULD...

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____

PLAY IT FORWARD

WORTH KNOWING
