

Article: Proximity: The Most Important Factor in Making a Friendship is How Close You Are Physically.

Pre-reading vocabulary word

1. An important vocabulary word in this article is “proximity.” Read these sample sentences and choose the correct meaning.

- Sample sentence: I could feel the heat from the fire because of my close proximity to it.
- Sample sentence: Because of the proximity of our college to Asia, we have a lot of Asian students here.

Choose the correct meaning of proximity.

- a) How large something is.
- b) How near something is.
- c) How old something is.

Pre-reading exercises

Before you read the article, look at the box below. In the box, Readers A and B wrote reflections telling how they felt about the article. Read their reflections. Then do Exercise 1 under the box.

Two readers’ reflections (feelings) about this article.

Reader A: *I agree with the author about something. Most people have a misunderstanding about how we become friends with other people. ...*

Reader B: *I found some important information in this article. I now understand why my ESLA instructor told us to sit in the front row in all our college classes. ...*

Exercise 1 Pre-reading: Read the reflections of Readers A and B and answer questions below.

1. What reflection type did Reader A use?
 - a) She explained what was important in the article.
 - b) She told how the article is connected to her life.
 - c) She told how she agreed / disagreed with the author.
2. What reflection type did Reader B use?
 - a) She explained what was important in the article.
 - b) She told how the article is connected to her life.
 - c) She told how she agreed / disagreed with the author.

Exercise 2 Pre-reading: While you are reading the article, think about your reactions to (feelings about) the information. At the end of this study guide, you will write a reflection. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

Exercise 3: Quick reading. Read ONLY

- (1) the first paragraph,

- (2) the first sentence of each paragraph
- (3) the last paragraph

Proximity: The Most Important Factor in Making a Friendship

¹ When we become friends with someone, it's probably because we like each other's personalities, or we share the same interests, for example, hobbies or certain sports. Perhaps it's because we belong to the same group or have the same religion. These are all reasons why people become friends, but a researcher wanted to find out what is the one most important factor that determines if people will become friends with each other. The result is quite amazing.

² The researcher, Mady Segal, a professor of sociology at Eastern Michigan University, conducted a study of 45 men who were in a class studying to be police officers. (These students were called cadets.) From her research, she was able to predict very accurately which cadets would become friends with each other. Surprisingly, the factor was their last (family) names. For example, Cadet Thompson was likely to become friends with Cadet Taylor and Cadet Adams was likely to become friends with Cadet Aaronson.

Police-cadets study

³ Here is the reason for this. In the class, the cadets were assigned seats alphabetically, meaning in the order of the alphabet (A, B, C, D etc.) according to their family names. So, Taylor sat near Thompson (perhaps in front of him), but he didn't sit near Adams or Aaronson.

⁴ Segal gave the cadets a questionnaire asking them whom they had formed close friendships with. About 90% of them said that it was with someone who sat right next to them in the class. She found that if two men sat even just a few chairs farther away, the chance that they would have a close

relationship would be a lot smaller. In sum, the most important factor in determining whether or not two cadets would become friends with each other was proximity in the classroom, in other words, how near they sat to each other; it was *not* sharing a common background or common interest.

⁵ In their book, *Click: The Magic of Instant Connections*, Ori and Rom Brafman tell about the cadets research above and similar studies about proximity. In one such study, psychologist Leon Frestinger looked at students living in college dormitories. He wanted to find out what might be the reasons why some students in the dorm had more friends than others.

College dorm study

⁶ Frestinger found that the people who lived at the end of the halls of the dorms were *less* popular than those who live in the center. In other words, the ones near the center had a large number of friends. These popular students and less popular students seemed to be similar in their social skills and physical attractiveness, so Frestinger wanted to solve the mystery of why the ones who lived in the center of the halls had more friendships.

⁷ At first, we might think that the students who lived at the end of the halls chose to have a quiet room, and the ones in the center asked to be where more people were around them so that they could have more interactions. But in Frestinger's study, the students weren't able to choose their rooms; the rooms were assigned to them by their college. (In other words, the rooms were assigned at random.) Therefore, there had to be another explanation.

⁸ Frestinger's findings were similar to what Segal discovered with the cadets. About 40% of the students in the dorms said that their closest friends were the ones whose room was next to them (in other words, just 19 feet away). Interestingly, only 20% of the students had formed close friendships with someone who lived just two doors away (about 38 feet apart). Also, for students who lived three doors away, only 10% considered each other close friends. In summary, the crucial factor in determining who would have the most friendships was their proximity to other students. It makes sense that the ones who lived at the end of halls would have fewer close relationships because there were fewer people living near them.

College lecture room study

⁹ It seems reasonable that we are more likely to form relationships with people whom we run into often because we probably will have conversations with them. However, what happens if people see each other often but don't say anything? An example of this is seeing the same person at our bus stop; perhaps we just nod to each other as a greeting but don't talk. Psychologists call this type of interaction, "passive contact." Richard Moreland and Scott Beach, two psychologists, wanted to find out if passive contact would affect how we felt about each other.

¹⁰ To set up the experiment, these two psychologists gathered photos of four women who were the same age and looked similar. They showed these photos to a randomly chosen group of people who rated the four women by giving scores about four characteristics of each woman: (1) attractiveness, (2) likability, and (3) how friendly they seemed. All four women received the same scores by this group of people; in other words, they agreed that these women were very similar.

¹¹ The four women were asked to attend a psychology course that was held at a university in a large lecture hall that included 200 students for one term. For the experiment, one of the women never went to class, a second one attended only five classes, the third went to 10 class sessions and the fourth attended 15 sessions. None of the 200 students in the lecture hall knew about the experiment.

¹² Here is how the experiment was conducted. The three women who attended the class were told by the researchers to arrive a few minutes early. They did not attend the same class session. When one of the women arrived, she walked slowly toward the front of the class where all the other students could see her. The researchers told the women not to talk or nod or smile at the other students. If a student tried to talk to them, they were told to ignore him or her. In other words, they only had passive contact.

¹³ At the end of the term, the researchers showed slides of the four women to the 200 students in the class and asked them if they recognized the women. On average, only 10% of the students said that one of the four women looked familiar, but they said that they didn't know where they had seen her.

¹⁴ Next, the researchers asked the 200 classmates to evaluate each of the four women. They asked the students to rate them on a variety of characteristics such as how interesting they seemed, their attractiveness, popularity and intelligence. Remember, earlier a group of people had given these four women the same score about these characteristics.

¹⁵ The results of the study found that the more class sessions that a woman attended, the more the students found her attractive

and the more they wanted to spend time with her. There was an especially large difference between the woman who attended 15 classes and the one who attended none.

¹⁶ As mentioned above, most of the students hadn't remembered seeing any of the women. Thus, it seems that they made the ratings at a subconscious level. Just seeing her made her seem more attractive to them.

¹⁷ The researchers asked the 200 students, "Imagine that you met the woman and learned more about her. What would be the probability (0-100%) that you would become friends?" Interestingly, the woman who attended no class scored 41%, the one who attended five class sessions got 43% and the ones who attended 10 and 15 classes scored 57 and 60% chance respectively that they would become friends with the students.

¹⁸ Brafman and Brafman, in their book *Click*, summarize these studies by saying that we are more likely to make friendships with people who are physically near us. Even if we don't actually talk to them, proximity can have a positive effect on us. According to them, if you want to meet someone at a party, it's a better idea to stand near them than to just look at them across a crowded room.

Exercise 4: Answer these questions after doing a quick reading.

1. One important point that we learn from this article is

- a) Being physically near someone can affect the chance that we'll become friends.
- b) Attractive women will have more friends than less attractive ones.
- c) Belonging to a sports team is a good way to make friends.

2. Answer True (T) or False (F).

- ___ 1) The article is about friendships.
- ___ 2) The article is about husbands and wives.
- ___ 3) Researchers studied policemen who were trying to solve a crime.
- ___ 4) At least one of the studies was about students.
- ___ 5) In one study, some women were involved

Part 1

Exercise 4: Read ¶ 1-8 of the article.

Exercise 5: Answer the study guide questions below.

1. According to ¶ 1, the researchers ...

- a) wanted to prove that the most important reason people become friends is that they have similar personalities.
- b) wanted to find out why people become friends.
- c) wanted to make recommendations to people who are looking for friends.

2. About ¶ 2-4, the cadet study, if the underlined words are a mistake, write the correction above them. If they are not a mistake, write "OK" above them. (Notice: these are not grammar mistakes.)

OK *cadets*

Researchers studied 45 men who were police officers. The researcher found that the cadets whose first names were alphabetically close to each other were more likely to become roommates. About 90% of the cadets said that they had a close friendship with someone who sat right next to them in the police car. In sum, the most important factor in two cadets becoming friends was how old they were.

These next questions are about ¶ 5-8, the college dorm study.

3. What was the purpose of the college dorm study?
 - a) To find out why some students seemed more popular than others.
 - b) To find out how to help students become more popular.
 - c) To find out how to improve college dorms.
4. Frestinger found that the reason some students had more friends was ...
 - a) because they had better social skills.
 - b) because they were better looking physically.
 - c) because of where their dorm room was located.
5. In the study, some students had rooms at the end of the halls ...
 - a) because they wanted quiet rooms.
 - b) because the college gave them those rooms.
 - c) because they wanted rooms near a lot of people.
6. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too hard for you.
 - According to ¶ 8, "Frestinger's findings were similar to what Segal discovered with the cadets." Explain how the findings were similar.
7. (Choose one) Students who lived next to each other were more likely / less likely to be friends than students whose rooms were two doors apart.
8. Explain this quote: "In summary, the crucial factor in determining who would have the most friendships was their proximity to other students."

9. Write a short reflection about the information in ¶ 1-8. You can write just one or two sentences. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

Part 1 of the article ¶1-8

Exercise 6. Academic Vocabulary Definition Exercise Look in the article and find the words that have these meanings.

	Word	¶	Find the word that means . . .
1.		look at paragraph 2	say that something will happen before it happens
2.		2	correctly and true in every detail
3.		3	gave someone a particular thing
4.	(2 words)	7	without any plan, or goal or pattern
5.		8	very, very important

Exercise 7. Vocabulary Fill-in Exercise: Choose the words in Exercise 5 to fill in the blanks below.

- The police found the thief because the store own described his appearance _____.
- Doctors _____ that we will have good health when we are older if we exercise when we are young.
- Math is a _____ subject for anyone who wants to be a computer programmer.
- Sara couldn't decide where to go for a vacation, so she put the names of five cities on pieces of paper, put the piece of paper in a small box, and then chose one _____.
- When a new employee started working at our company, our boss _____ him/her to work with an older employee as partners.

PART 2**Exercise 8: Read ¶ 9-18**

1. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too hard for you.

• In ¶ 9, it mentions "passive contact." Give an example of passive contact that you've recently had.

2. About the college lecture room study, paraphrase these paragraphs by filling in the blanks with the words in the box.

200 students	different	similar	the 200 students	front row
20	no	more attractive and likeable	never	sometimes
looked similar	middle of the class	who had never seen them before		

The researchers started the study by first showing pictures of four women to some people _____
 _____. The reason that they did this was because
 they wanted to make sure that people would agree that these women looked _____
 _____. Then the experiment began. It took place in a class with _____
 _____ in a large lecture hall on a college campus during one term. Three of women attended
 either 10 classes, 15 classes or _____ classes. When one of the women arrived, she
 walked to the front of the hall and sat in the _____. She _____
 _____ talked to anyone. At the end of the term, the researchers showed slides of each of the
 four women to _____. Although the people earlier had said all
 four women _____, the 200 students said that they looked _____
 _____. The one who attended the most classes was rated as _____
 _____.

3. Why did the researchers start by asking a randomly chosen group of people to rate the women?
- Because they didn't want to have a woman who looked more attractive than the others for the experiment.
 - Because they wanted four women who looked more friendly than the 200 students in the class.
 - Because they didn't want the women to talk to anyone during the class.

4. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too hard for you.

- In ¶ 18, it says, "Even if we don't actually talk to them, proximity can have a positive effect on us." Explain what this means.

Exercise 9. Write a reflection about the article. Try to write a paragraph with several sentences. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- I was surprised by something in this article.*

PART 2: ¶ 9-18

Exercise 10. Academic Vocabulary Definition Exercise Look in the article and find the words that have these meanings.

	Word	¶	Find the word that means . . .
1.		look at paragraph 9	move your head up and down to non-verbally say hi or yes
2.		10	in a way that something is chosen by chance, not on purpose
3.		12	pay no attention to someone or something on purpose
4.		14	judge how good or useful or successful something is
5.		16	describes ideas and feelings that are hidden in your mind and affect your behavior. You do not know that you have them.

Exercise 11. Vocabulary Fill-in Exercise: Choose the words in Exercise 5 to fill in the blanks below.

- Jane doesn't know why she is afraid of dogs. The reason is probably in her _____ mind.
- When I'm telling my opinion to a group of people, I feel more confident if they _____ their heads.
- I always _____ my brother's advice because he seems to always be wrong when he makes a recommendation.
- In a lottery, the winning number is chosen _____.
- Before buying a car, it's a good idea to _____ it by driving it first.

KEY**Article: Proximity: The Most Important Factor in Making a Friendship****Pre-reading vocabulary word**

1. An important vocabulary word in this article is “proximity.” Read these sample sentences and choose the correct meaning.

- Sample sentence: I could feel the heat from the fire because of my close proximity to it.
- Sample sentence: Because of the proximity of our college to Asia, we have a lot of Asian students here.

Choose the correct meaning of proximity.

- a) How large something is.
- b) How near something is.
- c) How old something is.

Pre-reading exercises

Before you read the article, look at the box below. In the box, Readers A and B wrote ...

Two readers’ reflections (feelings) about this article.

Reader A: *I agree with the author about something. Most people have a misunderstanding about how we become friends with other people. ...*

Reader B: *I found some important information in this article. I now understand why my ESLA instructor told us to sit in the front row in all our college classes. ...*

Exercise 1 Pre-reading: Read the reflections of Readers A and B and answer questions below.

1. a) She explained what was important in the article.
b) She told how the article is connected to her life.
 c) She told how she agreed / disagreed with the author.
2. a) She explained what was important in the article.
b) She told how the article is connected to her life.
c) She told how she agreed / disagreed with the author.

Exercise 2 Pre-reading: While you are reading the article, think about your reactions to (feelings about) the information. At the end of this study guide, you will write a reflection. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

Exercise 3: Quick reading. Read ONLY

KEY

Exercise 4: Answer these questions after doing a quick reading.

1. One important point that we learn from this article is

- a) Being physically near someone can affect the chance that we'll become friends.
- b) Attractive women will have more friends than less attractive ones.
- c) Belonging to a sports team is a good way to make friends.

2. Answer True (T) or False (F).

- T_ 1) The article is about friendships.
- F__ 2) The article is about husbands and wives.
- F__ 3) Reseachers studied policemen who were trying to solve a crime.
- T_ 4) At least one of the studies was about students.
- T__ 5) In one study, some women were involved.

Part 1

Exercise 4: Read ¶ 1-8 of the article.

Exercise 5: Answer the study guide questions below.

1. According to ¶ 1, the researchers ...

- a) wanted to prove that the most important reason people become friends is that they have similar personalities.
- b) wanted to find out why people become friends.
- c) wanted to make recommendations to people who are looking for friends.

2. About ¶ 2-4, the cadet study, if the underlined words are a mistake, write the correction above them. If they are not a mistake, write "OK" above them. (Notice: these are not grammar mistakes.)

Researchers studied ^{OK}45 men who were ^{cadets}police officers. The researcher found that the cadets whose first names were alphabetically close to each other were more likely to become roommates. About 90% of the cadets said that they had a close friendship with someone who sat right next to them in the police car. In sum, the most important factor in two cadets becoming friends was how old they were.

These next questions are about ¶ 5-8, the college dorm study.

3. What was the purpose of the college dorm study?
 - a) To find out why some students seemed more popular than others.
 - b) To find out how to help students become more popular.
 - c) To find out how to improve college dorms.
4. Frestinger found that the reason some students had more friends was ...
 - a) because they had better social skills.
 - b) because they were better looking physically.
 - c) because of where their dorm room was located.
5. In the study, some students had rooms at the end of the halls ...
 - a) because they wanted quiet rooms.
 - b) because the college gave them those rooms.
 - c) because they wanted rooms near a lot of people.
6. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too hard for you.
 - According to ¶ 8, "Frestinger's findings were similar to what Segal discovered with the cadets." Explain how the findings were similar.

In both case, friends were determined by how close they physically were to each other.

7. (Choose one) Students who lived next to each other were more likely / less likely] to be friends than students whose rooms were two doors apart.
8. Explain this quote: "In summary, the crucial factor in determining who would have the most friendships was their proximity to other students."

How close your room was to another student decided the chance that they would become your friend.

9. Write a short reflection about the information in ¶ 1-8. You can write just one or two sentences. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:
 - *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
 - *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
 - *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
 - *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
 - *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
 - *I was surprised by something in this article.*

KEY

Part 1 of the article ¶1-8

Exercise 6. Academic Vocabulary Definition Exercise Look in the article and find the words that have these meanings.

	Word	¶	Find the word that means . . .
1.	predict	look at paragraph 2	say that something will happen before it happens
2.	accurately	2	correctly and true in every detail
3.	assigned	3	gave someone a particular thing
4.	at random (2 words)	7	without any plan, or goal or pattern
5.	crucial	8	very, very important

Exercise 7. Vocabulary Fill-in Exercise: Choose the words in Exercise 5 to fill in the blanks below.

- The police found the thief because the store own described his appearance accurately.
- Doctors predict that we will have good health when we are older if we exercise when we are young.
- Math is a crucial subject for anyone who wants to be a computer programmer.
- Sara couldn't decide where to go for a vacation, so she put the names of five cities on pieces of paper, put the piece of paper in a small box, and then chose one at random.
- When a new employee started working at our company, our boss assigned him/her to work with an older employee as partners.

KEY**PART 2****Exercise 8: Read ¶ 9-18**

1. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too hard for you.

• In ¶ 9, it mentions "passive contact." Give an example of passive contact that you've recently had.

You see or notice someone but don't say anything.

2. About the college lecture room study, paraphrase these paragraphs by filling in the blanks with the words in the box.

The researchers started the study by first showing pictures of three women to some people who had never seen them before. The reason that they did this was because they wanted to make sure that people would agree that these women looked similar. Then the experiment began. It took place in a class with 200 students in a large lecture hall on a college campus during one term. The three women attended either 10 classes, 15 classes or no classes. When one of the women arrived, she walked to the front of the hall and sat in the front row. She never talked to anyone. At the end of the term, the researchers showed slides of each of the three women to the 200 students. Although the people earlier had said all three women looked similar, the 200 students said that they looked different. The one who attended the most classes was rated as more attractive and likeable.

3. Why did the researches start by asking a randomly chosen group of people to rate the women?

- a) Because they didn't want to have a woman who looked more attractive than the others for the experiment.
- b) Because they wanted four women who looked more friendly than the 200 students in the class.
- c) Because they didn't want the women to talk to anyone during the class.

KEY

4. **Challenging Question.** You don't have to answer it if it's too hard for you.

- In ¶ 18, it says, "Even if we don't actually talk to them, proximity can have a positive effect on us." Explain what this means.

If two people are near each other they will have a good feeling about each other even if they don't talk.

Exercise 9. Write a reflection about the article. Try to write a paragraph with several sentences. In your reaction, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

KEY**PART 2: ¶ 9-18**

Exercise 10. Academic Vocabulary Definition Exercise Look in the article and find the words that have these meanings.

	Word	¶	Find the word that means . . .
1.	nod	look at paragraph 9	move your head up and down to non-verbally say hi or yes
2.	randomly	10	in a way that something is chosen by chance, not on purpose
3.	ignore	12	pay no attention to someone or something on purpose
4.	evaluate	14	judge how good or useful or successful something is
5.	subconscious	16	describes ideas and feelings that are hidden in your mind and affect your behavior. You do not know that you have them.

Exercise 11. Vocabulary Fill-in Exercise: Choose the words in Exercise 5 to fill in the blanks below.

- Jane doesn't know why she is afraid of dogs. The reason is probably in her subconscious mind.
- When I'm telling my opinion to a group of people, I feel more confident if they nod their heads.
- I always ignore my brother's advice because he seems to always be wrong when he makes a recommendation.
- In a lottery, the winning number is chosen randomly.
- Before buying a car, it's a good idea to evaluate it by driving it first.