

How to Keep Your Friends During This Election

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Election season is well underway, and so is the nastiness.

There is yelling, fighting, lying, spreading of misinformation, and name-calling.

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And I'm not talking about the candidates.

Rather, I'm talking about friends. I'm talking about their posts, articles, and memes on social media. I'm talking about folks who are otherwise nice, polite, and level-headed. But there is something about politics that turns even the most angelic people I know into big-yapped, mind-posessed demons.

With quite a long way to go until the presidential election itself, how can you keep your friends while productively adding to the overall political conversation?

1. Know what the heck you're talking about. Most of what I see and hear is ignorant at best and absolutely false at worst. If you are going to discuss politics, you need to educate yourself so not to sound like a total moron. Feel free to borrow your kids' U.S. government textbooks and refresh your knowledge. Use Google to read about governmental structure and history from reputable sources. Consider news stories from multiple news outlets. However you choose to do it, just do it. I beg of you. Be intelligent, and sound intelligent.

2. Ask questions rather than make statements. Most folks get themselves into trouble by making inflammatory statements that benefit no one. These statements will never positively influence someone else, so there is no point in posting them. You will offend people and lose friends. Rather, be open to a discussion by asking questions. Then, actually consider the answers you receive. Be respectful. You don't have to change your mind on an issue, but wouldn't it be awesome to see it from someone else's perspective? You might just find yourself becoming a deep thinker. Ask questions, and then listen. Novel idea, I know.

3. Refuse to post (or repost) stupidity. This should go without saying, but most (if not all) political memes are stupid and/or wrong. They contain incorrect information, false or misleading "facts," and are rude. Don't be the friend who fills up everyone's newsfeed with these political piles of dog doo. A good rule of thumb is to ask if what you're about to post will benefit those who will see it. If not, don't post it. That would be stupid.

4. Check, double-check, and triple-check your posts for accuracy. Don't believe everything you read, and for goodness' sake, don't repost everything you read. Check the dates on articles to be sure they are still relevant. Research more information on your topic before posting anything to be sure your information is reliable. If you cannot find supporting evidence, err on the side of not posting. That way, you won't look like an absolute idiot.

5. Be humble and kind. That is [great advice from Tim McGraw](#), which is especially useful during this presidential election season. Be nice. Treat others how you would like to be treated. Learn to appreciate and respect differences. Make it your mission to stay positive. Keep your mouth shut tight and your fingers off the keyboard

whenever you want to get negative. Walk away. I'm serious. Some things are better left unsaid (maybe even most things).

This election season can be fun and informative. We have so much to learn from those around us. Everyone has opinions that are worthy of sharing (in a respectful way, of course), and it sure doesn't hurt any of us to listen and consider them. If you do, you'll keep your friends during this election season, and you just might learn something new along the way. Imagine that!