

“Is having a
 boyfriend
 or girlfriend
 OK before
 age 16
 as long as you are
 not dating?”

The titles “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” can possibly mean several different things today. Nowadays these titles usually represent a symbol of exclusive or steady dating. If this is the case, such activity is not appropriate anytime during your teenage years—before or after age 16. *For the Strength of Youth* teaches, “Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person” ([2011], 4). Although some people may use these titles to simply express their current feelings for another person, by labeling someone as your “boyfriend” or “girlfriend,” you are signaling to others that you have both chosen to pair off.

Perhaps the easiest way to understand this issue is to recognize what it means to date. A date is a time when two people of the opposite gender pair up to participate in an activity where they can get to know each other better. Remember that dating during your teenage years is designed to help you have fun and develop friendships with lots of different people, not to build a serious relationship with one person. When you pair off—whether with the titles “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” or without them—you limit your chances of building these friendships during your youth. **NE**



Rules for a Reason

I think not dating before 16 also means no boyfriend/girlfriend. Having a boyfriend/girlfriend before 16 (even when “not dating”) may lead to actual dating before 16. The prophets set these rules for a reason, and we should follow them.

Mary S., 15, Oregon, USA



A Focus on Friendship

At 16 years old, you shouldn’t really be focusing on girlfriends or boyfriends at all. You should be focusing more on your friends and friendship. Look for friends, not a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Ernesto B., 15, Manila, Philippines

Keeping It Clean

The guideline that tells us not to date before we’re 16 isn’t set to make things difficult; it’s meant to help us keep ourselves pure and clean! Having a boyfriend or girlfriend before you’re 16 might be trying to get around the rules.

Mary A., 15, Missouri, USA



More Opportunities

It’s better not to go steady as a teen whether you’re old enough to date or not. If you have a boyfriend before you’re 16, then when you finally turn 16 the chances are you would only

be interested in that one person. It takes away good opportunities to meet people and make friends.

Taylor G., 17, Washington, USA



Not the Standard

Having a boyfriend before you're 16, whether you are really "dating" or not, is not the standard for Latter-day Saints. *For the Strength of Youth* says, "Developing serious relationships too early in life can limit the number of other people you meet and can perhaps lead to immorality" ([2011], 4).

Chloey G., 15, Nevada, USA



The Instacouple Phenomenon

The idea of having a "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" means that you are a couple. It implies there should be a longtime relationship, meaning that you have been dating. It's kind of like the idea of the "instacouple" (see "Is Dating Dead?" *New Era*, April 2010, 19, or visit lds.org/go/13A). You are only really getting to know one person, and the relationship is very exclusive.

Connor C., 15, Maryland, USA

Worth the Wait

Having a boyfriend/girlfriend before you're 16 can lead to many different things, and you may encounter things you wouldn't have if you had waited.

As a young teenager, you don't know fully what you're feeling and you're probably more in love with the idea of having a boyfriend rather than the actual boy. Waiting is worth it!

Christina C., 17, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands



Only Friends

I think it's OK to be friends with a boy or girl, as long as it's *only* friends. Do not become boyfriend and girlfriend, because there would be a temptation to date, and the prophet said not to date before you are 16.

Zane L., 13, Utah, USA

Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as official pronouncements of Church doctrine.



DON'T PAIR OFF

"We are convinced that dating should not even begin until you are 16. And then, ideal dating is on a group basis. Stay in group activities; don't pair off. Avoid steady dating. Steady dating is courtship, and surely the beginning of courtship ought to be delayed until you have emerged from your teens."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "You're in the Driver's Seat," *New Era*, June 2004, 8.

NEXT QUESTION

"I take **modesty** seriously, but some sports teams require us to wear short shorts or shirts without sleeves. Is this OK?"

Send your answer and photo by February 15, 2013.

Go to newera.lds.org and click "Submit Material."

You can also write to us at newera@ldschurch.org

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Responses may be edited for length or clarity.