

# Friendly or flirting? Here's how to tell

A flirting co-worker can make you feel uncomfortable. Worse, such behavior can be considered sexual harassment. Here's the difference.

**Friendly is natural—and widespread.** If a co-worker chats or jokes with and compliments everyone, the person is likely just friendly.

**Flirty is more focused on you.** If a co-worker is more serious or reserved with other co-workers, and rarely jokes around or compliments them, but is always that way with you, it could be flirting.

**Sexual harassment.** If the flirter's actions are one-way, persistent—despite your requests for the person to stop—and make you uneasy, it's sexual harassment.

So what should you do? Regardless of the situation, if a person's behavior makes you feel uncomfortable, address it. Set some boundaries by directly asking the person to put an end to specific behaviors.

Politely, but firmly say: "It makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you say/do \_\_\_\_\_. I'm sure you don't mean to, but please stop." It might cause some tension, but that will eventually go away as the two of you interact on a professional level.

However, if the advances don't stop, you need to discuss the matter with HR because further action is necessary.

— Adapted from ["Understanding Fine Line Between Flirting, Friendliness in the Office,"](#) Jessie Roti, *Chicago Tribune*, [www.chicagotribune.com](http://www.chicagotribune.com).