

## Pictures for Reflection

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## About Twins

Twins, unique and similar – oh, the marvel of it all. Consider the fact that twins represent only about 3% of the population. The amazing journey of a set of *identical twins* begins with one single egg, which splits during fertilization into two eggs with the same genes. Having the same genetic makeup is why identical twins have similar hair and eye color, height, and build. Most often, identical twins also share the same family environment, which means they also have a similar background.

Even though identical twins come from the same fertilized egg, they are not completely the same because of genetic variations within each developing egg. Examining twin's DNA show differences at various points in their genomes. While quite similar, each twin is uniquely different. Identical twins are known to have different tastes in friends, music, and hobbies. Twins, though genetically alike, are still two different, unique individuals with their own personal interests.

Although some think that twins have a telepathic bond, there is no evidence that this type of bond really exists. Twins' minds may be similar but they are not linked together. Twins, who are separated at birth, though, often have similar interests such as reading the same books and participating in similar hobbies and household routines.

Just as amazing, *fraternal twins* come from two separate fertilized eggs at the same time of conception. Fraternal twins each inherit a *different set of genes*. These twins' genes are no more alike than other siblings in a family even though they may look quite similar. Fraternal twins can be the same sex or opposite sex. Fraternal twins may or may not look similar in appearance. Male/female twins, of course, develop uniquely across gender lines. Fraternal twins are more likely to have different personalities than identical pairs, but still share many personality traits.

Whether identical or fraternal, twins begin a journey of innate friendship from the womb into adulthood. Twins are aware of each other from infancy, but babies, in general, even twins, don't begin to really interact with one another until around age one. In normal child development, children first play alongside each other in solitary play, then side-by-side in parallel play.

Eventually, around age 3, they move on to social play with each other. Twins are the same in this development.

While the bond begins at birth, as twins begin to play with each other, the lifelong friendship begins. With friendship being an important part of early child development, twins have the advantage of a built-in playmate. Twins have the unique opportunity to share their social world together. Because of this, twins are often more socially aware and more socially confident than children who are not twins. Twins, early on, learn how to negotiate, share, take turns, and express their thoughts and feelings with each other. The daily give-and-take with twins becomes a fulfilling friendship of first friends and then best friends - a friendship which provides each other with support and care. This is very different from a single child's experience, even with siblings. Each twin has a lifelong relationship with his or her twin of the same age.

Eventually, twins take these personal social skills into a wider range of friendships with children outside the family. Interestingly, one-egg twins share more outside friendships with others than two-egg twins, suggesting that similar genetic relatedness may contribute to having the same mutual friends. Same friends may also choose the one-egg twins more often because they have similar personality characteristics.

Along this amazing journey for twins, moving from childhood into adulthood, it is important to note that being a twin does not overshadow each person's individual identity or sense of self – each is unique, yet similar. As adult twins grow older, it is truly together, friends for life. The marvel is that twins enjoy this special, unique bond and identity of being part of a twin pair - for a lifetime.

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