

THE MATCH GUIDE

The Future is Big



Big Brothers Big Sisters.
OF SOUTHWESTERN ILLINOIS

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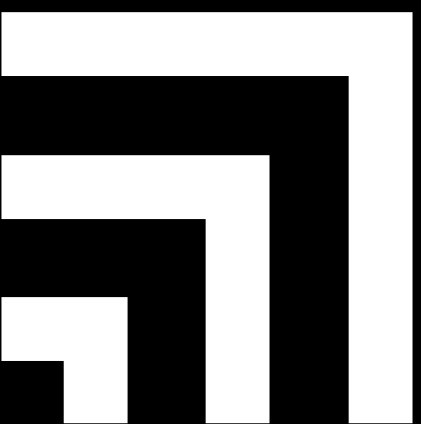
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WELCOME LETTER

Hi!

As a former Little, I can't emphasize enough that this step of volunteering for a Little isn't little at all. You are embarking on such a special journey. You are opening up your life to change and be changed by your Little. This journey is more amazing and impactful than I can put into words.

At 6 years old, I was shy and quiet, struggling to fit in at school and home. There were few opportunities for success in my community and my view of the world was smaller than you could imagine. When my mom decided to enroll me in BBBS, the thought of spending time with a stranger was terrifying. That stranger turned out to be one of the most supportive and inspiring women I have had the pleasure to know.

“I CAN'T WAIT
FOR YOU TO
LIGHT UP THE
LIVES OF
THE FUTURE.”

My Big, Jeanine, worked tirelessly to gain my trust. Her unwavering commitment allowed me to believe in myself and gain the confidence needed to make my own space in this world. She has been my rock, walking at my side for many of life's transitions. Some of the best parts of me are developed and influenced by Jeanine.

Nineteen years later and Jeanine is still my go-to girl. We always say that we aged out of the program but never out of each other's lives. We regularly call and text; I still visit and travel with her. She will dance at my wedding in September. I am beyond blessed to call Jeanine my confidant and friend.

Your dedication to your role as a Big means so much to me and all the Littles out there. Jeanine's willingness to shine her light to illuminate the dark spaces in my life has had a profound effect. I can't wait for you to light up the lives of the future. Thank you.

-Little Sister Erykah



BIG CONGRATS

DEFENDERS OF POTENTIAL

It's finally here! All your hard work has paid off — you're officially matched!

We are so excited for you and your new Little. We've been with you for this entire process, and that doesn't stop now. We'll be with you throughout your entire match to support you and your Little every step of the way!

We've probably said it several times already, but we just want to take a moment to say it again: Thank you for becoming a Big. Thank you for stepping up to the plate. Thank you for being a voice and an advocate for children & teens in the Metro East. Being a Big is no small commitment, and your dedication throughout this entire process speaks highly of your character. We are honored to have you on our team. Thank you.

For more than 40 years, we've introduced thousands of Bigs and Littles — it's our favorite part of what we do. Today, we're adding you and your Little to the BBBS family! While we'll be with you to support you throughout your Match, this is now your opportunity to take the reins and build a trusting, meaningful friendship with your Little.

In this book, we've collected some of our best advice and the most important need-to-know information. We encourage you to save this

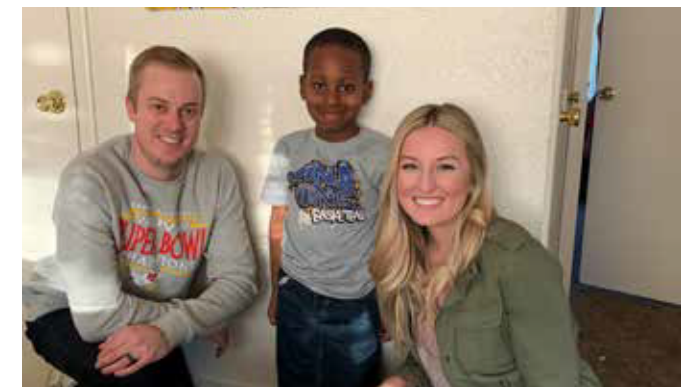
book and keep it somewhere safe so you can refer back to as needed. This is by no means a comprehensive guide, so if you have questions or need help with something that isn't included in this book, feel free to reach out to your match support specialist for assistance!

We are so excited to watch you and your Little grow together. Today is a big day, and you should be proud of yourself.

Now get ready — the best parts come next! In the words of Dr. Seuss:

“You're off to Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting.
So...get on your way!”

Thank you for being a Defender of Potential. And welcome to the family.



GETTING STARTED

If you're reading this, that means you're officially a Big! Hooray! Your first match hang out will happen minutes after receiving this guide — how exciting (and maybe nerve-racking, too)!

During the course of a few outings one of the following questions may cross your mind: "What in the world are we going to talk about? Why are they so quiet? Am I doing this wrong? Do they not like me?"

If so, don't worry — you're in good company! It's very normal for the first few outings to feel a little awkward. Think back to some of your early friendships: Were you immediately best friends, or did it take time? Did you immediately trust them with all of your secrets, or were you a little shy at first?

More than likely, it took time for you to build the relationships you are in today. Awkward silences are inevitable, and one-word answers will be common. The most important thing to keep in mind when you are just getting started is that everything takes time — relationships are often built in baby steps! Embrace the awkward.

In the following pages, we've included some great tools to get you started:

- **Ice breakers:** These are great questions that you can take turns answering to learn more about each other. Check out the next page for a list of our favorites!
- **Activity ideas:** These are some of our favorite go-to options for Bigs and Littles to do together. Whenever you're drawing a blank on what to do, refer to this list!

- **Favorite Things worksheet:** This is a great way for you and your Little to share a lot of your basic likes and favorites.
- **Match Bucket List:** On your second or third outing together, take time to make a list of things you want to do together. Do they want to try new activities? Do you have shared hobbies or favorite foods? This list can serve as your idea list that you can use to plan your future outings!
- **Match Goals:** Keep track of your match goals with this goal worksheet.

Additionally, we have three great digital resources for you, too:

- **The BBBSIL Bigs Facebook group:** This is a great place to connect and share ideas with other Bigs. You can request to join the group at facebook.com/groups/BBBSILBigs
- **The Inspire: A Big's Guide to their First Year:** Within two weeks of meeting your Little, you'll receive the first edition of The Inspire in your inbox. The Inspire is a monthly coaching email that will offer timely advice and tips throughout the first year of your match. You won't want to miss these!
- **Bigs Corner:** This is a helpful page on our website that lists all our current ticket opportunities, deals, discounts, and match activities. Check out www.bbbsil.org/bigscorner to see what's available now!

ICE BREAKERS

01. IF YOU COULD LEARN A NEW SKILL, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

02. WOULD YOU EVER WANT TO BE FAMOUS? IF SO, WHAT FOR?

03. IF YOU COULD BE ANY ANIMAL, WHICH WOULD YOU BE AND WHY?

04. IF YOU WON A MILLION DOLLARS, WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU WOULD BUY?

05. IF YOU COULD TRAVEL ANYWHERE, WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

06. IF YOU COULD HAVE ONE SUPER POWER, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

07. IF YOU COULD HAVE ONE WISH, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

08. WHAT IS YOUR DREAM JOB?

09. EAT ONLY ONE FOOD FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, WHAT DO YOU CHOOSE?

10. HANG OUT WITH ANY TV/CARTOON CHARACTER, WHO AND WHY?

ACTIVITY IDEAS

01. GATEWAY ARCH AND ARCH MUSEUM

Experience a destination where the stories are as incredible as the views.

02. TIME IN THE KITCHEN

Cooking, baking, and grilling goes over so well with Littles and Bigs, and having them work on their reading, by reading a recipe, is icing on the cake.

03. ST. LOUIS ZOO

Enjoy a get-away destination that brings together more than 16,000 wild animals.

04. PARKS

Take your dog to the park, bring along a picnic lunch or a board game, walk or jog the trails, maybe even try a mini photoshoot! Get creative, the options are endless!

05. CAHOKIA MOUNDS

A historic Native American site enriched with tons of history right in our backyard.

06. YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

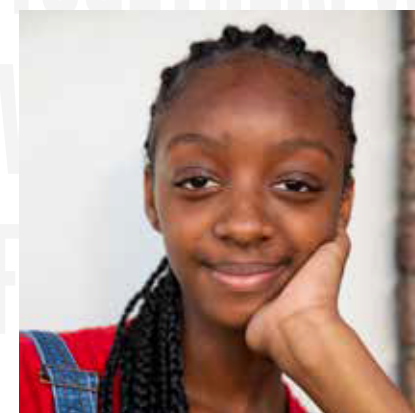
See a book, grab a book, read a book, Hey! Journey through your favorite books together.

07. GET CREATIVE

Paint, build, chalk, draw — it's doesn't matter! Get creative and have fun.

08. MUSIC & MOVIES

Share playlists and/or your favorite movies to learn a little more about each other!



FAVORITE THINGS

01. FAVORITE CANDY:

02. FAVORITE SONG:

03. FAVORITE TV SHOW:

04. FAVORITE SPORT:

05. FAVORITE BOOK:

06. FAVORITE FOOD:

07. FAVORITE CELEBRITY OR ATHLETE:

08. FAVORITE SUBJECT IN SCHOOL:

09. FAVORITE EMOJI:

10. FAVORITE WEEKEND ACTIVITY:

MATCH BUCKET LIST

PLACES TO GO:

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FOODS TO TRY:

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MOVIES TO WATCH:

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SKILLS TO LEARN:

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Scheduling, Curfews:

Allergies and Medications/Dietary Restrictions:

Limitations on Specific Activities:

If no one is home at the time of drop off, how do you want that handled?

Time Frame:

Suggested Goals & Strategies for Match:

1. Build a Relationship
-
2.
-
3.
-

Guardian & Information

Parent Name:

Parent Phone:

Parent Email:

Address:

Little Name:

Little Phone:

Texting: YES NO GROUP TEXT ONLY

Little DOB:

Grade:

School:

Emergency Contact Name:

Phone Number:

“MONEY CAN’T BUY REAL FRIENDSHIP.”

Early on in your Match, especially in the first few months, we encourage you to do as many free things as possible! You don’t want to give your Little the impression that you’ll be doing big, expensive outings every week — that’s not sustainable.

When in doubt, keep it simple! Things like a movie night at your home, playing board games, or going on a hike are all fun free activities that Littles love!

There are also several places in that you can visit for free, like the Gateway Arch and Arch Museum, St. Louis Zoo, and your local library!

If you like, you and your Little can even create your budget together! Decide what you are comfortable with spending per month, then work with your Little to plan how that money will be spent. If you do want to go on more expensive outings, use them as an opportunity to reward good behavior, i.e., your Little earns better grades, they have better behavior at school, etc.

We know that going out to eat is fun — but don’t do it too often! It is not your responsibility to feed your Little each time you see them. Feel free to try to schedule your outings around mealtimes, but make sure your Little’s guardian knows whether or not they’ll be eating with you so they can plan accordingly.

Again, when in doubt, keep it simple. When we ask Littles what their favorite thing to do with their Big is, you’d be surprised how many say, “just hanging out at their house.” Money can’t buy real friendship, and that’s what we’re all here for. It’s not about money — it’s just about being there for them!



BUILDING A MATCH

Safety first! If you haven't already, be sure to save your Match Support Specialist phone number in your phone. If a Little has a medical emergency, has been abused, or is perceived to be in danger, if needed, call 911 and then contact our Program Manager, Misti Johnson at 618-239-4081.

Communication is key! You should communicate with your Little's parent/guardian and your match support specialist on a regular basis. Create a regular process for how you will set up match outings together with your Little's guardian.

Be consistent! When possible, try to keep a consistent schedule/set days for outings so it is easier for the family to anticipate and plan around your outings. Some Bigs even make calendars with their Littles and coordinate them with their guardians! If you know your schedule a month in advance, make the plan now so that everyone knows what to expect.

Be patient! It's important to remember that people open up at their own pace. Big and Little relationships are very unique — nothing like them exists out in the "real" world! Give them time to adjust and get comfortable with you.

The best thing you can do is regularly express that you care about them and want them to be safe and happy. Over time, they'll grow to truly believe this, and you'll bond as a result!

Have realistic expectations. Especially early on in a Match, Bigs sometimes wonder if their Little likes them or not. Developing trust is a huge part of developing your friendship with your Little, and it may take some time for them

to show you or tell you how they are really feeling.

Remember: just because your Little doesn't say "I like you!" out loud doesn't mean they don't! Over time, being consistent in your Little's life could help them come out of their shell, and they may eventually become comfortable enough to show how they truly feel about you and the match.

It's okay to say no. We want you to feel comfortable in your match, which means there may be times where you need to say no. For example: If your Little is asking you to buy them something, you can use that opportunity as a teaching moment to explain why that's something you can't do. If you want, you can potentially use what they're asking for as a reward for good grades, attendance, etc.

Stay in contact with BBBSIL! Monthly checkins with your match support specialist are required for the first year of your Match. While your match support specialist will work with you to schedule a time to talk each month, don't feel like that's the only time you can talk to them! We're here to support you in any way we can — don't be afraid to call or email us whenever you need help or advice.

Remember: you're not alone! It's not your responsibility to make sure your Little is getting As in school, maintaining perfect attendance, and always on their best behavior at home. When you do decide to help with one or more of these, take advantage of the people around you! Your match support specialists, school counselors, teachers, and so many more professionals can be great partners for you as you support your Little.

STEP 1

PRE-MATCH PROCESS



ENROLLMENT & MATCHING

STEP 2

MATCH CREATION

STEP 3

MATCH EXPERIENCE

MATCH SUPPORT: 6 - 12 YEARS OLD

- Focus on:
- Building Friendships
 - Social Skills and Manners
 - Self-Esteem

- Resources/Support:
- Individualized Match Support
 - Match Activities
 - Community Resources
 - Match Meet Ups

MATCH SUPPORT: 13 - 15 YEARS OLD

- Focus on:
- Building Friendships
 - Goal Setting
 - Self-Confidence

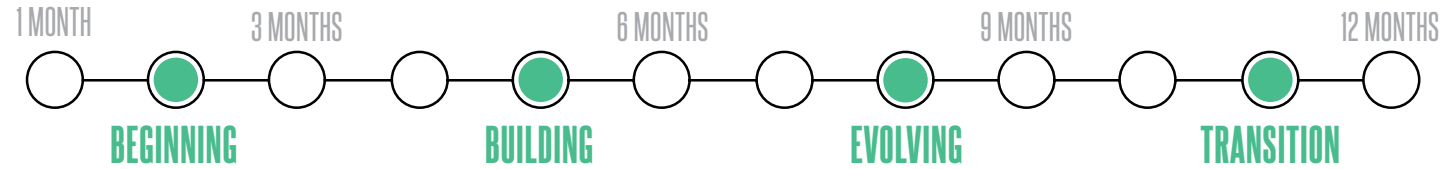
- Resources/Support:
- Individualized Match Support
 - Match Activities
 - Networking Events
 - Goal Setting
 - ACT Prep
 - Resource Database
 - Match Meet Ups

MATCH SUPPORT: 16 - 18 YEARS OLD

- Focus on:
- Building Friendships
 - Post-Secondary Path
 - Workplace Training

- Resources/Support:
- Individualized Match Support
 - Match Activities
 - Networking Events
 - Internships
 - College & Career Coaching
 - Resource Database
 - Match Meet Ups

STAGES OF A MATCH



STAGE 01: BEGINNING

The beginning of a match, as you are probably well-aware, is often awkward. During this stage of the match, it's important for you and your Little to simply get to know one another and get comfortable with each other.

The primary goal for Stage 1 is simply to build trust and set boundaries and expectations. It's important to be patient and take things slow — it'll pay off in the long run!

STAGE 02: BUILDING/GROWTH

Remember, consistent communication and schedules will help you and your Little build a stronger foundation of trust. Routine is key for your match to keep developing, so it's important to be as consistent as possible.

As you progress through Stage 2, you might start to see some of your Little's walls come down as they become more comfortable. Your Little might also start to try to push boundaries as they continue to figure out you and your relationship. Just be consistent in your expectations and boundaries, and they will eventually settle into their role.

Your Little's age can have a significant impact on their attitude during this stage. Younger Littles might be on their best behavior for a few months, but might start to misbehave as they become more comfortable with you, while older Littles could keep their distance at first, but then warm up more in the second half of the first year. No matter which situation may come up for you, patience, consistency, and your match support specialist will help you through it!

STAGE 03: EVOLVING/ MAINTENANCE

In this stage, you will continue to build trust, and your Little may occasionally test your relationship. It can be hard to not take it personally when they cancel an outing or act bored, but it's important to let your Little know that you are committed to the friendship. In this stage, it's important to take the opportunity to talk about the future with your Little and how you can help them achieve their goals. This is the stage where you will spend a majority of your time as a match.

STAGE 04: TRANSITION

Transition is a stage that you and your Little may enter many times over the course of your match. Significant shifts in your life or your Little's life, such as going to a new school, moving, graduating, or any number of other big events, can introduce the Transition stage that may often require adjustments in your match so that the match continues to work well for both you and your Little.

COMMON QUESTIONS

01. WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY?

If it's life-threatening, call 911. Then call your Little's parent/guardian, and then your match support specialist. If it's not life-threatening, call your Little's parent/guardian and then your match support specialist. If your match support specialist does not answer, call our Program Manager at 618-239-4081.

02. WHAT DO I DO IF MY LITTLE TELLS ME ABOUT ABUSE/NEGLECT IN THE HOME?

If your Little tells you that they are being abused or neglected, or you suspect that abuse or neglect is taking place, reach out to your match support specialist immediately. Share what you know with your match support specialist, and allow them to be the one to make the hotline call. Remember, the identity of reporters is always kept confidential by the Children's Division and is never shared with the family. Bigs should not feel an obligation to tell the family that a hotline call was made.

Do's and Do Not's for when a child discloses abuse:

- DO tell the child it's not his/her fault.
- DO tell the child you believe him/her.
- DO NOT make promises you can't keep.
- DO NOT ask for more details or ask direct questions.
- DO NOT confront the alleged abuser.

03. WHEN SHOULD I INTRODUCE MY LITTLE TO MY HOME, FAMILY, PET, ETC.?

We recommend spending your first month or two with your Little outside of your home. Use this initial time to really focus on getting to know one another! After a couple months, you can start introducing them to your family, home, etc., but don't feel like you have to do it all at once, either.

04. HOW DO I BUILD A RAPPORT WITH MY LITTLE'S GUARDIAN?

We recommend stopping and talking to them when you drop your Little off from an outing. This is a great opportunity to tell them how your outing went, share any important moments or accomplishments your Little might have had during the outing, and also ask for feedback and plan for your next outing!

05. HOW SHOULD I GO ABOUT SCHEDULING OUR OUTINGS?

You should work directly with your Little's parent or guardian when setting up outings with your Little. Do not make plans with your Little without their guardian/parent's input and approval. When trying to get something on the calendar, be sure to plan a few days/at least a week in advance so your Little and their family has enough time to check their own calendar, make sure they're available, respond to you to coordinate details, etc.

CONTACT US

- **Expectations** — Remember, monthly check-ins with your match support specialist are required for the first year of your Match, then every 3 months for the duration of your match. If your match support specialist calls or sends an email, please respond within 48 hours.
- **Contact Information** — Follow us on social media to stay up to date!
 - Join the BBBSIL Bigs Facebook Group: facebook.com/groups/BBBSILBigs/
 - If you need to reach your match support specialist after-hours and they aren't available, call our Program Manager at 618-239-4081.

OTHER WAYS TO CONNECT & SUPPORT

- **Host a Community Chat:** A Community Chat is a FREE opportunity for you and your coworkers to learn about Big Brothers Big Sisters and the many different ways you can get involved.
- **Become a Match Maker:** You can make a big difference for the children and teens we serve by becoming a Match Maker. Match Makers are monthly donors that help BBBSIL introduce a waiting Little to their Big every month.
- **Trivia for Kids' Sake:** Companies, organizations, and groups of friends form a team, fundraise and enjoy a night of trivia with food, drinks and a chance to win prizes at GCS Credit Union Ballpark. Bonus - you get the awesome feeling of supporting children in our community through one to one mentoring.

Always refer to the full set of signed paperwork for questions/concerns. Here are a few reminders of our policies:

MATCH AGREEMENT

Keep in mind the commitment you have made and the rules laid out in the Match Agreement contract. Refer to the Match Agreement document to review all guidelines.

OVERNIGHTS

Overnights are not allowed.

SOCIAL MEDIA & PHOTO

Always get parental permission to post about your Little. Be aware of our confidentiality policy and be sure to not post identifying information including last names, addresses, family details, etc. Be safe and thoughtful when using social media. Refer to the full policy with any questions.

TRANSPORTATION

We require volunteers to have a valid driver's license and current auto insurance on their vehicle. Bigs must follow the state laws when transporting Littles. Seatbelts should always be used. Refer to the full transportation policy with any questions.

MATCH SUPPORT

Regular contact with your match support specialist is a requirement of the program. Please return calls and emails promptly to remain in active standing.



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