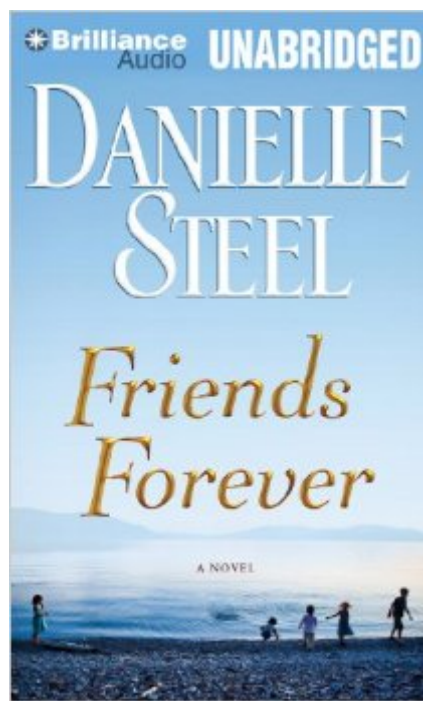


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# Friends Forever: A Novel



## Synopsis

Five children meet on the first day of kindergarten. In the years that follow, they become friends and more than friends. Together, they will find strength, meet challenges, face life's adventures, endure loss, face stark realities, and open their hearts. In this moving novel, #1 New York Times bestselling author Danielle Steel traces their unforgettable journey • full of tests and trials • as three boys and two girls discover the vital bonds that will last a lifetime. Gabby, Billy, Izzie, Andy, and Sean • each bursting with their own personality, strikingly different looks and talents, in sports, science, and the arts. Each drawn by the magical spark of connection that happens to the young. At the exclusive Atwood School, on a bright September day, starting in kindergarten they become an inseparable group known to outsiders as the Big Five. In this rarefied world, five families grow closer, and five children bloom beside one another, unaware of the storms gathering around them. As they turn from grade-schoolers to teenagers, seemingly perfect lives are buffeted by unraveling families, unfortunate missteps, and losses and victories great and small. And, one by one, they turn back to the Big Five to regain their footing and their steady course. But as they emerge from Atwood and enter the college years, the way forward is neither safe nor clear. As their lives separate and diverge, the challenges and risks become greater, the losses sharper, and the right paths harder to choose, in a journey of friendship, survival, and love. In what may be her most intricate and emotionally powerful novel yet, Danielle Steel tells a heart-wrenching, ultimately triumphant story that spans decades, weaves together a vivid cast of characters, and captures the challenges we face in life • sometimes, if we're lucky, with a friend forever by our side.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Danielle Steel used to be my favorite author years ago, but as time went on her books seemed to include a lot of repetition of descriptions and phrases. To the point, that at times, I thought I was reading the same page over and over. "Friends Forever" is entirely different from Danielle Steel's other books. It is a love story, but not really a romantic love story. It is about the kind of love that surrounds a good friendship. Also, it is the story of a group of five kids, who met in kindergarten and became a tightly bound group as they grew up ~ loving, supporting and caring for each other into early adulthood. I wish I could say that what this group encountered while becoming adults was unusual or "over the top", but unfortunately I think these types of life obstacles happen more and more today in all of our lives. This book restored my interest in this author, there was little repetition and what was there fit well on the page. The main characters were engaging and their families and siblings also well presented. Because of the character development there were more not only five stories going on, but also a series of mini-sagas which will keep readers on their toes remembering what was happening at all times and gathering clues as to what will come next.

Why? I was looking for a light summer book, sometimes I do like her books for that reason. I don't think she's a good writer, but they are fun at times. This was terrible! I really don't know why I kept going. Besides the depressing death issues, we never actually got in the heads of any of the main characters (or any characters). It was like reading a time line--first this happened, then this happened, and then this happened. Why does she start so many sentences with the word "and"? I also took offense to the character of Izzie becoming a teacher, and being continually reminded that it was "beneath" her. She herself said she only fell into it. I guess being a teacher, it just pissed me off. Especially when her day ended at 2:30 and she was "free to enjoy the afternoon." She also kept alluding to the fact that the current generation of young people are all dying at an early age. Are there any facts to back this up? I know a lot of young people and they are not all dying. By the end of the book, I was actually hoping that the other two main characters would also die.

It has been a LONG time since I read a Danielle Steele book. I'm a fan of her older work, like "Star" and my all time favorite, "Jewels." To me, those books had lots of fun drama and more important to me, were great escapism. This latest book was pretty depressing, not to mention incredibly unrealistic, for a summer time read. I loved the idea of the story- following the lives of five best friends from Kindergarten through their young adult years- and that's what made me pick on of Steele's books after all these years. I knew everything couldn't stay rosy for the friends after all

those years, but I was expecting a lot of soap opera-ish, over the top drama and backstabbing before they all came round and were able to be friends again. I can't go into too much detail without ruining the plotline for others, but let's just say there are lots of bad times to go with the good and that's when I think Steele went a little overboard. At one point I just couldn't believe what I was reading. There are also a lot of characters to keep straight because we get the storylines of many of the parents/families too. While I liked this and enjoyed most of the characters, it was like 15-20 people to keep straight. I wish she would have gone into even more detail and it could have become like a saga- but the pace is pretty quick- many years get skipped over while the kids are growing up but I guess that's needed to keep the story going. All in all, I just had a lot of trouble with Steele's plots for the five main characters. Just too fantastic, and not in a good way.

Most of Danielle Steel's work is passable, a pleasant way to pass a few hours. But this is terrible. For starters, there are way too many characters--aside from the five "friends", the extended family of each of them, each of whom Steel tries to give a story of their own. I say "tries", because with so many, she's unable to give anyone any significant time or depth. Then, by the time the book is done, she's killed off THREE of the friends, all before even the age of 25, before they get to get married or have children. I can certainly understand one, and knowing Steel's work, I would have surprised if she HADN'T killed off at least one of them before the book's conclusion. But three is extreme to the point of ridiculousness. It also feels like the book ends too soon. I would have liked to see the characters get married and have children. Perhaps Steel felt with the book beginning when they were all in kindergarten that to take them into middle-age would have dragged it out too long. That's a valid point, but it still doesn't remedy the abrupt conclusion. Read Erich Segal's "The Class" for a much better depiction of the intertwined lives of five friends.

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