



# How to Lose Friends and Alienate People

By Toby Young

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In 1995 high-flying British journalist Toby Young left London for New York to become a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*. Other Brits had taken Manhattan—Alistair Cooke then, Anna Wintour now—so why couldn't he? But things didn't go quite according to plan. Within the space of two years he was fired from *Vanity Fair*, banned from the most fashionable bar in the city, and couldn't get a date for love or money. Even the local AA group wanted nothing to do with him.

*How to Lose Friends and Alienate People* is Toby Young's hilarious account of the five years he spent looking for love in all the wrong places and steadily working his way down the New York food chain, from glossy magazine editor to crash-test dummy for interactive sex toys. But it's more than "the longest self-deprecating joke since the complete works of Woody Allen" (*Sunday Times*); it's also a seditious attack on the culture of celebrity from inside the belly of the beast. And there's even a happy ending as Toby Young marries—"for proper non-cynical reasons," as he puts it—the woman of his dreams. "Some people are lucky enough to stumble across the right path straight away; most of us only discover what the right one is by going down the wrong one first."

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## How to Lose Friends and Alienate People By Toby Young Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The appeal of journalist Young's memoir is his willingness to skewer himself as savagely as he does his acquaintances and colleagues. The self-portrait is rarely flattering and sometimes repellent, but carries a startling ring of truth. Young targets Manhattan's superficial social scene and gives a slashing insider's view of *Vanity Fair* and its parent company, Cond, Nast. Consumed with the desire to be "somebody," Young is hired by editor Graydon Carter and unwittingly offends everyone he seeks to impress. He learns that journalists must have "a plausible manner, rat-like cunning and a little literary ability," and he encounters a caste system so rigid that if an important editor trips and falls, etiquette dictates to leave her on the floor and walk on, rather than offer assistance or directly address her. Young's description of his efforts to crash Oscar parties is an appallingly accurate picture of wannabes whose identity depends on the celebrities they cultivate. He's amusingly perceptive in his analyses of women whose motive for marrying prominent men is to impress other women; this jealousy is brilliantly summed up by Gore Vidal's comment, "Every time a friend succeeds, I die a little." British-born Young, who has also been fired from the *Times* of London and the *Guardian*, paints Carter as a fascinatingly complex individual, capable of devastating employees or helping them face dire health problems. He also includes intriguing profiles of power couple Tina Brown and Harry Evans, and *Sex and the City* creator Candace Bushnell. What keeps readers on Young's side is his courage to keep fighting, even when confronted by publicist Peggy Siegal's withering line, "I have no respect for writers. They never make money. They're like poor people looking in the windows."

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From [Booklist](#)

Inspired by Hollywood classics such as *The Front Page*, British writer Young longed to move to New York and work as a journalist for a glossy magazine, hobnobbing with the rich and famous. He jumps at the chance for a tryout with *Vanity Fair* magazine and eventually lands a tenuous position. But he's disappointed to learn that, compared with British reporters, American journalists are sycophants, slavering over celebrities and cozying up to publicists. Still, because he is so enamored of New York, he thoroughly enjoys his stay. Eventually, however, his admittedly juvenile pranks and failure to adapt to the culture, as well as his excessive drinking, end his career at *Vanity Fair*. Now on the fringes, freelancing for British publications, he manages to offend the powerful media couple Tina Brown and Harry Evans, triggering a lawsuit that is later dropped. But the contretemps actually helps to boost his career. This thoroughly humorous memoir provides a scathing portrait of the egomaniacal world of New York media and an insightful look at modern American celebrity culture. *Vanessa Bush*

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Review

Roger Ebert, "Chicago Sun Times," 10/02/08 "I have been a follower of the real Toby Young for years. He is much more preposterous than "Sidney Young," the hero of this film, which is based on Toby's memoir...He is a very funny writer, often providing inspiring material for himself...."How to Lose Friends & Alienate People" is possibly the best movie that could be made about Toby Young that isn't rated NC-17...In a boring old world, such people are to be prized."

### Users Review

From reader reviews:

**Lila Dixon:**

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