

From “Who, Me?” to “I Do”: Marriage, Step by Step

Whilst no two marriages are the same, there are certain features common to any relationship that lead up to this eventuality. They are worth exploring if only to see if you might be on the path to wedded bliss yourself, and if so, how far along it you are. If you're shopping for wedding gifts, see if you can get some inspiration from this little guide.

Stage 1 – That first lingering glance

Meeting one's partner was traditionally done shortly after the couple's eyes met across a smoke-filled room. But now the smoking ban is in force, are relationships doomed outside the fields of firefighting and pest extermination? Probably not. Some awkward folk have opted to ignore the smoky room tradition altogether and meet their lovers at work or via a friend, or have taken matters into their own hands and met over the internet or through a lonely hearts column. “Our smileys met over a 2Mb broadband connection” just doesn't have the same ring to it, but it's probably a lot healthier.

Stage 2 – The introduction

This is a tricky bit. Do you big yourself up a bit or play it straight? If the relationship lasts more than a few days, you might wish you'd been a little more honest about your yacht / Porsche / talent / friends / job (delete as applicable), but then again if you're too honest you'll probably never make it to stage 3 anyway. So play it safe and just don't mention your negative points; by the time they have surfaced you'll either be hopelessly in love or deleted from their SIM card.

Stage 3 – Dating

Dating sounds so quaint in the 21st century, doesn't it? But you get the picture ... going to the cinema, the pub, the football match, the embroidery class; whatever floats your collective boat. It's a phase of innocently getting to know each other whilst still living separate lives.

Stage 4 – Being an item

Now it's starting to get serious. Your social lives more or less revolve around each other, and though you might be allowed to see your friends every now and again, you're under strict instructions regarding your conduct, whether the details are spelt explicitly out or merely assumed. This is the stage where you will learn the true meaning of the word doghouse, even though you always thought it was simply a kennel. People will also start referring to you as X and Y, rather than just you, and you might get a personalized windscreen sticker if you live in the 1970s.

Stage 5 – Cohabiting

Some couples prefer to wait for stage 6 or stage 7 before sharing a roof, but as a test of the strength of your affection for each other's bedroom, bathroom and kitchen habits, it is second to none.

Stage 6 – Engagement

You are so sure of your love for each other that you decide to get married and make your intentions clear with a ring and maybe even a party. To potential suitors, you are officially out of bounds. One of you might suggest a joint bank account or a mortgage. This is a test. Nobody knows the right answer. You'll also be arranging the special day and compiling a list of wedding gifts during this time, so it's great fun!

Stage 7 – Marriage

That first meeting, be it hazy or high resolution, is but a distant memory as you make your vows and declare your love in public. Whether it's at a place of worship, a registry office or some other romantic location, it's the culmination of one long procession of events ... and the start of another one.

For further information, please visit <http://www.gettingpersonal.co.uk>

About the Author

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