

Some Girl's Been Texting My Boyfriend!

Dear Advice Girl,

I looked at my bf's cell phone and it had IM's and text messages from a girl name Annie. Does that mean he's cheating on me?! I gotta know.

So you snooped, huh? When you snoop, sometimes you find things that don't look so good. And tons of messages from a girl your boyfriend's never mentioned before don't look good at *all*.

Now that you know about it, you *have* to confront him - otherwise you'll go crazy with paranoia. The problem is, once you break the subject, *you* won't look too good either, you big snoop.

Ask him about it, but be prepared for him to never trust you again. Though if he really *is* cheating, the feeling will be mutual.

And next time, if you have any suspicions - with him, a new boyfriend, or anyone else - talk to them about it *before* you go rifling through their stuff.

He cheats on his gf with me - and I like it!

Dear Advice Girl,

I like this guy but he has a girlfriend. He cheats on her with me and I like it. In fact, he comes over to see me all the time.

I know I shouldn't fall for him because he's just gonna be like all the other hurtful guys out there. What should I do??

Not all guys are hurtful. But if the guys you hang out with are the kinds that cheat on their girlfriends, then you're a lot more likely to run into some jerks.

Quit fooling around with this guy. You *know* it's wrong - you don't need *me* to tell you that.

Find yourself a nice, honest guy who won't cheat on you. (And then be sure not to cheat on *him*, either.)

My boyfriend compares me to his ex

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend always compares me to his ex girlfriend. It really bothers me! Why does he keep doing it? And what should I say to him?

There are two reasons why your bf might be comparing you to his ex:

1. **He's clueless that it bothers you.** Is he fairly new to the whole dating thing? Then he might not realize you don't want to hear about his last relationship (unless he's bitching about it). Tell him how you feel, and school him on shutting his trap.
2. **He's not over his ex-girlfriend.** He might be having fun with you, but emotionally, all roads lead back to his ex. If this is the case, then tell him to go back to her. You're not interested in scoring the silver medal in the Girlfriend Olympics.

Can I date someone younger than me?

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend is a year younger than me, and I'm afraid that when people find out, I'm going to be the laughing stock forever. (We've been dating in secret for three months.) Should I break up with him?

First of all, dating a younger guy (as long as he's not, like, eight) is absolutely, 100% no big deal. There's no rule that says girls can't be older than their boyfriends. If you're compatible, then who cares?

Second of all, don't let your fear of the rumor mill destroy your relationship. When you look back on your high school years, it'll be lame if you have tons of regrets 'cause you were scared of what random people thought of you.

Go public with your relationship, and if anyone hates on you, roll your eyes and laugh.

6 signs your boyfriend is gay!

Dear Advice Girl,

I love my boyfriend, but my friends are always teasing me that he is gay. How can I know if they're right or wrong?

There's no guaranteed way to tell if your guy is gay. Even if he has some stereotypically gay qualities, like he's super into floral arrangements, all it means is that he loves

petunias and he's not afraid to show it.

If your friends are reading into one of his hobbies or the way he looks, they're wrong, so just ignore them. But if your gut tells you they're right, see if any of these signs are true:

1. **He's over-the-top homophobic.** It might be a sign that he's trying to compensate for gay tendencies. (Or maybe he's just an intolerant jerk.)
2. **He doesn't like to kiss you.** Whether the *real* people he wants to kiss are guys or other girls, I can't say. Either way, it's bad news.
3. **He's had boyfriends in the past.** Guys are less likely than girls to change their sexuality, or to date someone of the same gender just as an experiment. If he *used* to be attracted to guys, he probably still is.
4. **He's mega-secretive about his free time.** He's hiding *something* from you, which can't be good.
5. **When you ask him about his sexuality, he gets mega-defensive.** If he were totally confident he was straight, then he wouldn't have a reason to get so angry.
6. **You catch him making out with another dude.** This one's kind of a giveaway.

8 Signs Your Boyfriend Really Loves You

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend says that he loves me, but how can I know for sure that he really cares about me? Are there any special signs?

Aw, you mean you can't just take his word for it?

Okay, okay - here's a cheat sheet. If four or more of these are true, then your boyfriend's being sincere:

1. **He calls you as much as you call him.** (Or texts you or IM's you or whatever.) If you're the only one initiating the convos, he doesn't think you're worth his time.
2. **He wants you around when his friends are there.** If he's keeping you from his pals, there's a chance he sees you as just a booty call.
3. **He's not afraid to hold your hand in public.** Hand-holding is just about the girliest PDA there is. If he'll do it for you, he's hooked.

4. **He doesn't mind doing the most boring things with you.** Does he only seem to be up for hanging out when your folks are out of town? Or is he cool just coming over to help you organize your closet? That's true love right there.
5. **He doesn't keep you a secret.** As in, you're all over his Facebook page. And when you meet his sister, she says, "OMG, I've heard so much about you!" instead of, "Vanessa *who*, now?"
6. **He's nice to your parents.** Guys who are only interested in hooking up *always* fail this test. They're bold enough to lie to *you*, but they chicken out when they meet your dad.
7. **He gets jealous when you talk to other guys.** If this is the only one you answered "yes" to, then your guy might just have jealousy issues. But combined with the sweeter stuff, it means he's afraid to lose you.
8. And finally, **you can just kinda feel it in your gut.** Ladies, listen to your gut. Your gut knows what it's talking about. If it says he's lying, then he probably is.

My boyfriend forgot our anniversary!

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend didn't know that today is our 2-week anniversary! What should I do?

Girls are usually more into the whole anniversary thing than guys are. (Why? I dunno. Biology, maybe?) It doesn't mean that guys aren't sweet and loving. It's just that they don't focus on milestones in the same way.

Still, a 2-week anniversary shouldn't be celebrated by anyone, ever. Stick with the basics: one-month, one-year, and every year after that.

But in all cases, don't assume that your bf is marking up the calendar on his own. Remind him about it or you'll be disappointed.

The two of you also need to decide what day to start counting from. Is it the day you became official bf and gf? Your first date? Your first kiss? It's up to you.

Whatever you do, don't pick *all* of them. There aren't enough Hallmark cards in the world to support that sorta thing.

What can I get my boyfriend for his birthday?

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend's birthday is coming up and I have no idea what to get him. We've been dating for four months. Do you have some ideas for a cute gift?

There's a couple of things you ought to know about boys and gifts:

1. **They're not all sentimental like we are.** So don't bother, like, framing a lock of your hair. Unless he's Lord Byron's illegitimate son, he won't appreciate it.
2. **They're not dying for a surprise.** It's okay to ask him what he wants. He'd rather get that Xbox game he's craving than a linen handkerchief he never even knew existed. Besides, showing him that you listen - and that you're down with the stuff he likes - is a present in itself.

But what if he shrugs his shoulders and says, "I dunno"? Well, here are some foolproof ideas:

- A DVD of his favorite TV show.
- A book on a topic you know he'll like.
- A mix CD of his favorite songs.
- A subscription to a cool magazine.
- A picnic starring all of his favorite foods.
- (Splurge alert.) A hot new phone or mp3 player you know he's been eyeing.
- Two tickets to an amusement park, concert or sporting event. (You get to be his date, of course.)

Getting a *little* sappy is always allowed. So instead of buying a corny drugstore card, make one yourself. He'll keep it forever (even if he pretends he won't).

My boyfriend and I are always fighting!

Dear Advice Girl,

I have been in a relationship for 6 months. We don't talk as much as we used to, and we fight at least once a day. What can we do to bring back that spark we had when we first started dating??

All couples argue. But a fight a day is kind of a lot.

If it's about the same thing every time (like the fact that he never calls you), then it'll always be an issue – and if it's driving you that crazy, you shouldn't date him.

If it's not one *big* argument, but lots of little ones, then shoot, you might not be that compatible. It's probably time to say goodbye in that case, too.

Not ready to give up so soon? Then sit your guy down and try to get at the root of what's *really* going on between you two. If you both want to make things work, then you've got to quit all the bickering and start compromising.

As for the "spark," well, don't obsess over it. Getting all giggly when you see your guy won't help much if you're gonna have a shouting match with him ten minutes later.

Peer pressured into dating!

Dear Advice Girl,

At my school, a lot of people think I should go out with this one guy. He's my friend, and it would be weird for him to be more than that. But I'm starting to be talked into it.

My mom is really strict and would probably blow if she knew, and I don't have any experience in dating...what should I do?

Your classmates are trying to pressure you into dating a guy, and that's just as bad as any other kind of peer pressure. (And also kind of weird. Can't they just worry about who *they're* dating and leave your love life alone?)

It's okay to turn to people for advice. (Shoot, I should know.) But if your gut's telling you one thing, and a bunch of random people who couldn't care less about your feelings are telling you another, then listen to your gut.

Which means, if you don't want to date this guy, then don't date him. And if people keep bugging you about it, tell them to mind their own business.

Can I go out with my cousin's crush?

Dear Advice Girl,

My cousin and I like the same guy. He's told me he likes me, not her. But I don't want to hurt her feelings. Will it make me a bad cousin if I go out with him??

Well, yeah. The rule is: if two friends (or, you know, cousins) like the same guy at the same time, then in order to be *truly* fair, neither one should date him. That way no one gets hurt over a relationship that wouldn't last that long anyway. (Unlike your cousin-

ness, which lasts forever.)

Sorry, but that's the way it goes. Sometimes you have to sacrifice a guy in order to do the right thing.

But don't worry too much about it. Another guy is probably right around the corner.

Should I keep him a secret from my friends?

Dear Advice Girl,

I just got a new boyfriend. I told my BFF, and she told *her* BFF, so now almost my whole circle of friends knows about us. It makes me nervous about me and him. Should I keep my relationship a secret or should I tell?

You're allowed to keep lots of things from your friends - you know, like your Facebook password, your credit card number and even the name of your crush - but shoot, keeping your *relationship* a secret just isn't fair. So tell them.

(Besides, if *you* don't tell them, someone else will.)

And don't worry about whether or not it'll hurt your relationship. If you two can't even survive *that*, then you've got bigger problems on your hands.

My boyfriend still thinks his ex is pretty!

Dear Advice Girl,

I started dating my boyfriend only a week after he split with his ex of two years.

I've asked him straight out who's prettier, and he always says, "You're both pretty in different ways." I want him to see me as the most beautiful, and I want him to forget her. Is that selfish?

It's not selfish to want to be the most important girl in your boyfriend's life (you know, besides his mom and little sis). But pestering him about it - and forcing him to compare you to his ex - makes you seem insecure, distrustful and kinda like a nag.

Of *course* your guy thinks his ex is pretty. Shoot, he might even think she's cool and fun, too. (Why else would he date her?)

But forget about *their* relationship - what about *yours*? Does makes you happy, stay

faithful and treat you like a good boyfriend should? Then relax and forget about the past already.

Why's he dating her instead of me?

Dear Advice Girl,

I asked this guy out, but he told me that he wouldn't go out with anyone for 5 weeks after he broke up with his ex. Then 3 days later, he starts going out with this girl he knows I can't stand! What do I do?

Well, there's nothing you *can* do. He didn't want to date you, but he also didn't want to hurt your feelings, so he lied to you.

Yeah, it was a pretty *dumb* lie, but what's the point in getting mad? It won't make him want you.

So take a couple of deep breaths, brush that dirt off your shoulder and move on.

Should I call him or what??

Dear Advice Girl,

I dated this guy long distance for 4 months. Then I found out he had a girlfriend, so I let him pick who he wanted to date, and he picked her.

They just broke up. We're still good friends, but he hasn't called me in a while. Should I call him or what??

I know he's lied to me before but I can't stop thinking about him.

Duuuuuude.

The guy lied to you about being single, and then he *dumped* you? And you *still* wanna date him?

Get the you-know-what over him already.

Here's how to start: never call him again. That's right. Delete his number from your phone, take him off your buddy list, let it go to voice mail if he ever calls. It sounds hard, but if you don't want to drag this on for the next year and a half, it's gotta be done.

He's only dating me 'cause he wants a girlfriend!

Dear Advice Girl,

I have a really great boyfriend. But he just told me that when we first started dating, he didn't really like me - he only wanted a girlfriend!

Should I break up with him? He says he loves me and that I was the best thing that ever happened to him. I don't want to break his heart or mine, since I really love him.

Dating someone just to *date* someone is pretty gross. It's dishonest and cruel, and it can lead to broken hearts.

So you can blame him for that - but you've also gotta give him credit for being honest. And despite his jerkiness early on, he's developed *real*, mushy, romantic feelings for you.

I know you're hurt and embarrassed over the whole thing, but be rational. Don't lose a great guy over it.

My boyfriend doesn't think I'm pretty!

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend doesn't think I'm pretty. He says that looks shouldn't matter and he loves me for other reasons.

But how can I not be hurt? And how can you be in love with someone you don't find attractive?

Looks aren't everything, and you don't need to think your sweetie is a total supermodel. But in order for a relationship to work, there's gotta be *some* physical attraction. Otherwise it's just a really sad friendship with super-awkward makeout sessions.

Your guy might say he loves you, but without that physical attraction, things ain't gonna last. I'm not saying you should dump him, but, well...do you really wanna spend more time with a guy who doesn't even like you like that?

You deserve a boyfriend who thinks you're beautiful. This guy isn't him, so maybe it's time to break things off and just be friends.

My friends hate me for dating the popular guy!

Dear Advice Girl,

I used to hate this popular guy, but I went on a date with him and it turns out I was wrong. He isn't a self-centered jock - he's really cool. And he asked me on a second date.

I didn't tell my friends because they hate him. I want to tell them they're wrong, but I'm afraid they'll start hating me too. They judge people too quickly. What should I do?

I sure hope you realize now that stereotypes are dumb, and so are cliques. But you've probably figured all that out.

So, how do you teach it to your friends? Start with the same way *you* learned it – help them get to know the popular guy better. Arrange a group hangout where they can see what a cool, decent guy he is.

If they still don't get it – or worse, if they start judging *you* - then maybe you've outgrown having petty, judgmental friends.

Should I put up with it or dump him?

Dear Advice Girl,

I'm going out with a guy who is late all the time. On top of that, sometimes he just won't show up or even call. Do I have to put up with it, or is there something, short of breaking up with him, that I can do?

Being late a couple times is forgivable. Shoot, it's okay even if he's late a *lot*, as long it doesn't bug you that much.

But if he ditches you or abandons you just *once* – and he doesn't apologize a *ton* for it – then something's wrong. Because he's basically saying, “You're easy to forget. And there's cooler stuff going on in my life than you.”

You can talk to him about it – but based on the way he's been acting, he's not going to change. More likely he'll just keep doing the same lame things till you can't take it anymore. Save some time and dump him now.

If that sounds rash, then, well, *fine*...go ahead and talk to him. But make sure he knows that if it happens just *once* more, his ass is grass.

Long-distance love: can it work?

Dear Advice Girl,

So I met this boy on the web, and he's from the USA and I'm in England. I really like him, like, he's extremely HOT. My friend says I should just have fun with him online but I don't know what to do! HELP

Listen to your friend – she's totally right. Wait couple decades before you use the Internet to “find your soulmate” or whatever. For now, stick to playing games, being penpals and other virtual stuff with people you don't know.

Enjoy your relationship with your hot Yankee boy for what it is: a fun, exciting learning experience that'll help you flirt with guys down the road.

But what if he's your soulmate, right? Well, if he is, he'll still be around a couple years from now when you're old enough to meet up. And if you discover along the way that he's *not* your soulmate (which he's probably not), you've just saved yourself a whole lotta plane fare.

My bf was slow dancing with other girls!

Dear Advice Girl,

Last night there was a school dance that I couldn't go to. Afterward, I got a call from my best friend saying my boyfriend was slow dancing with other girls. I was so upset, I cried myself to sleep. What should I do about him? I *really, really* like him, you know?

Slow dancing is usually just a way to be social and have fun. What did you expect your boyfriend to do during the slow songs? Slump into the corner and text you for three minutes?

If this is just a case of you feeling left out, then get over it. Feel honored that your guy can dance with his friends but know in his heart that he belongs to you.

But if you have reason to believe this was *more* than just slow dancing – like if he was dancing with the same girl all night – then talk to him. And thank your best friend for being such a good spy.

If he hates it, can I wear it anyway?

Buzz up!

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend hates ballroom-style dresses, but they're my favorite. I've tried to like other styles, but I seem to be drawn to the ballroom dresses. What should I do? Please myself, or please him?

Your guy shouldn't have any more say in how you dress than, like, your mom does. If he's got some fashion advice for you, it's okay to listen. But your personal style should always belong to you.

The point is, you should *never* change the way you dress just to please your man. If you like what you're wearing, then keep wearing it. (Unless it's laundry day.) And if you're heading to a ball, well, you kind of have to rock the ball gown.

Girls are always hugging my bf!

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend is really popular at school, and most of his friends are girls. They're always hugging him and it gets me jealous. Should I tell him that I'm not comfortable with it or just stay quiet? I don't want to seem clingy.

The downside of dating a flirty guy who's popular with the ladies is that, well, he's flirty. And he's popular with the ladies. Which, honestly, is probably one of the things that made you like him. (Who doesn't want to snag the guy that all the girls want?)

So instead of ranting at him, remember that he's not doing anything he didn't do *before* you pinned him down. Your best move is to be cool about it and get to know his friends a little better. You'll discover that they're not all out to steal him.

That is, unless this harmless flirting gets un-harmless. If you have a *really* good reason to suspect your man is cheating, then confront him about it.

My boyfriend forgot my birthday!

Dear Advice Girl,

I don't know if I should stay with my boyfriend or ditch him. He never pays much attention to me and always has an excuse for everything. It was my b-day recently and he didn't even bother to call me, let alone get me anything. I was sooooo disappointed. The thing is, I really like him. What should I do?

Birthdays are no-brainers in relationship land. You get your sweetheart a cute present, you go out to eat or something, and everybody's happy.

If your guy doesn't even *call* you on your big day, then something's really wrong here. And this isn't the first time he's let you down, either. You've given him lots of chances, and he keeps letting you down and hurting your feelings.

Dump him!

Oh, and...happy birthday!

Guys always fall in love with me!

Dear Advice Girl,

Every time I date a guy, he ends up falling madly in love with me super quickly. Then, a month or two into the relationship, I end up realizing we're not right for each other. The boy is then shattered for ages and never gets over me.

It hurts me more than anything breaking these guys' hearts. Should I just stop dating? Am I doing something wrong? I feel like a horrible person.

You're not a horrible person, and you don't have to give up dating. But you should probably quit bringing all those nice boys to tears. Here's how:

- **Don't be so quick to date them.** Just 'cause you think a guy is cute doesn't mean he *has* to be your boyfriend. Keep it friends-only, and only take things further if you're still into him after a couple of months. That way, if you change your mind, he won't be emotionally involved enough to get his heart broken.
- **When you date a guy, take it slow, alright?** No weekend-long marathon dates, no late night texts just to say you miss them, no "I love you" before you really mean it. If a guy knows you can live without him, he might not make himself so vulnerable.
- **Rip off the Band-Aid.** Once you decide you wanna get out, get out. Breaking things off gradually – by being distant and not returning his phone calls – will *add* to his obsession with you. Be firm about breaking up and it'll be easier for him to heal.

My boyfriend stares at my boobs!

Dear Advice Girl,

Whenever my bf and I hang out, he never makes eye contact with me. He's always looking at my breasts. I feel like he only wants to get to 2nd base with me. What should I do?

The thing about breasts is, for some people (especially the folks who don't have them), they're kind of hard *not* to look at. But luckily most of those people resist the urge (or just hide it really well).

Your boyfriend, however, is not so discreet. And what's more, he probably thinks you can't even tell he's doing it. So clue him in, alright? Next time you catch him, say, "Hey, I'm up *here*." He'll get totally embarrassed and snap out of it right away.

So does he want to get to second base with you? Well, of course he does. (He's a guy, isn't he?) But that doesn't mean he's going to be a jerk about it. Just know your makeout limits and don't be afraid to put your foot down before things get too far. And if he *does* get aggressive, you have my permission to pick up your boobs and run far, far away.

I'm afraid my BF's gonna start smoking!

Dear Advice Girl,

I've been going out with this guy for about a month. He's sweet and funny and I really like him but.....

His best friend smokes and has a bad home life. I'm afraid that if this keeps going on he might smoke too. Should I tell him to stop hanging out with his friend or what?

Smoking is gross, but it's got nothing to do with your relationship. Neither do the things going on at your guy's friend's house. So why are you obsessing? Are you *really* afraid for your guy's well-being, or are you just uncomfortable with other stuff – like the fact that his friends aren't people *you'd* choose as friends? Or maybe you want an excuse to keep your guy all to yourself.

We need to talk boundaries here, Katie. It's okay to tell your guy's friend not to smoke around you, and it's okay to tell him you think smoking is lame. It's also okay to never date smokers, ever. And it's *definitely* okay to talk to your guy about how much you care about him, and to help him make the right choices.

But you're not allowed to tell your guy who he can't hang out with. (Unless his friend is a wanted criminal or something.) Quit it with the "I-must-save-you-from-this-demon" bit and relax a little. Enjoy your boyfriend for the cool, sweet, funny guy he is.

She's the only girl who likes me!

Dear Advice Girl,

I got a new girlfriend a few days ago, and I'm afraid it won't work out. I mean I bet she's the only fish in the sea that likes me. What do I do?

So, wait. Nothing's actually going wrong? You're just scared that something's *gonna* go wrong, 'cause...well, basically, if she broke up with you, you don't think you could score another girlfriend?

Dude. That is *so* not the way you should think of relationships. You're thinking, "Being single is terrible, so I'd better do whatever I can to cling to this girl for dear life." That's crazy – how do you even know she's the right girl for you? Here's what you *should* be thinking:

"Hey, this is a new experience for both of us. Maybe it'll work out. Maybe she'll lose interest in me – or maybe I'll lose interest in *her*. Either way, if we break up, it's not the end of the world. It just means we weren't right for each other. And then I'll go back to being single, which is just fine by me."

Got it? Good. Now say it 500 times in front of the mirror every morning.

Is my friend gonna steal my boyfriend?

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend is cute and funny and I really love him. But here's my problem...I have this friend who calls dibs on every hot guy she sees. I always tell her that she can't call dibs cuz the guy may not like her. Then she hits me back with, "Yeah, but I get first chance with him."

I think it's dumb. And she has a bf who she's cheating on with 8 different guys. Now I'm afraid she might convince my bf that I'm cheating on him and then he'll go for her. What should I do?!?!?!?

Is all that really true? I doubt it, because, um, *eight guys??* Come on. How could you even keep track of them?

Well, let's say it *is* true. Then shoot, just stop hanging out with her. She sounds like a terrible friend and a terrible person - why do you want a friend like that? You don't have to stay friends with everyone you've ever been friends with since the beginning of time. Sometimes you just outgrow people, or you find out that they're total jerks. It's okay to let them go.

And as for your boyfriend: he's got no reason to believe that you'd cheat on him (right?). So just go on being the same awesome girlfriend you've always been. If that girl tries to steal him away, well, if he's a nice, decent person, he won't leave your side.

Do I have enough time to date someone?

Dear Advice Girl,

I'm going to be at my current high school in Virginia for one semester, and after that I'm moving to a different school, which is in North Carolina. Should I date while I'm in VA, or just not get too attached to anyone?

Get out there and date your booty off! One semester is *plenty* of time for a relationship (heck, some people fall in love in three weeks of summer camp). Conditions might not be right for anything longer-term, but who cares? You can still have some great experiences.

And there's a bonus – in a couple of months, you'll never have to see these folks again. So don't be afraid to get a little bold. Ask out a girl who intimidates you, or make small talk with the most popular girl in school. What have you got to lose? Come September, you'll be miles away.

How do I get a guy if I'm not preppy?

Dear Advice Girl,

I'm a different sort of kid. What I mean is at my school, there are girls in skirts (known as preps), the girls in the gym (the sporty ones), the geeks and so forth. You know, all of those "cliques."

My problem? I don't fit in anywhere, and I like it that way. But not fitting in has made it really hard to get to know guys that I'm interested in. I feel like a nobody and a freak. And when I do talk to my guy friends, everyone says we're flirting, but I'm not interested in them. HELP PLEASE!

You've got nothing to worry about – in fact, you seem pretty awesome to me. You've resisted turning into a total carbon copy, and you're comfortable doing your own thing.

So what are you so sad about? I mean, you have friends. You're not any more lonely than anyone else. If you finagled your way into one of those cliques, you'd have nothing to show for it except a bunch of weird new clothes and a gut feeling that something was wrong. You wouldn't have any more *real* friends, and your confidence level would drop the way it always does when you pretend to be something you're not. And none of that is gonna help you get a boyfriend.

So what will? Well, a change in attitude might help. Be confident in yourself – in *who you really are* – and it'll be easier to start conversations with boys, to flirt with them, and to do all those awkward things like asking them out.

And if some knuckleheads tease you for talking to your guy friends? Seriously, just ignore them. You've gotta block out all the bad vibes and focus on the good ones. It'll make you stronger, more secure, and even cooler than you already are.

At school, he doesn't act like my BF!

Dear Advice Girl,

Me and my boyfriend have been going out for about 2 weeks now. When we are in school, he doesn't act like my boyfriend... just a guy friend. But when we are anywhere else, he turns into my boyfriend. What does that mean?

I want to tell him that I don't like him doing that without being mean, any ideas?

Okay, here's the thing about school relationships. You were probably all excited to be in one, 'cause it meant holding hands in the hallways, sneaking kisses in the back row of assemblies and all that other PDA that looked so fun (and made you so jealous) when you saw other couples doing it. But some people just don't feel comfortable with PDA. Yeah, it can be fun, but it's also kind of rude, and not everyone likes being the center of attention in that way. And you have to respect that.

As long as your boy is still friendly to you at school, then you have nothing to worry about. (If he were flat-out ignoring you, then I'd be worried – it would be a sign that he was keeping you a secret, or was embarrassed of you, or was dating you for the wrong reasons.) So keep your criticism to yourself. You're lucky to be dating someone with such good manners and self-restraint.

My BF sends me texts about my mom!

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend really cares about me. But when I told him that I hated my mom, he started saying that since I don't love my own mom then I can't love him. Now he keeps sending me text messages saying, "Love your mom!" I want to break up with him.

I'll admit it, your boy's obsession with your mom is a little crazy, and a sign that maybe he's had some weird parental issues in the past. But hey, his heart's in the right place.

How about this: instead of breaking up with him, realize that he's right. As much as you "hate" your mom (for giving you a curfew, nitpicking about your messy room and other mom-ish stuff), you know deep down that she's your mom, and that you love her. So tell your BF that of course he's right, and that even though your mom can drive you nuts from time to time, nothing's more important than family. And then apologize, and *he'll* apologize, and the weirdo text messages will come to an end. Doesn't that sound nice?

Unless you don't like him that much, and you're just looking for an excuse to break up with him. If that's what's going on, then break up with him!

He asked me out! Was it just a joke?

Dear Advice Girl,

Today, in school, one of the guys I have a really big crush on asked me out. Sounds great, right? Guess again. :(I couldn't tell whether he was joking or not because he had a serious face but his friends were laughing hysterically behind him. So...I turned him down. Do you think I did the right thing?

Was your crush *really* asking you out? Probably not. Most likely he just wanted to make his friends laugh. In which case, he's a jerk, and turning him down was the coolest thing ever, 'cause now the joke's on him. Tee-hee.

But on the off chance that he really does like you, you'd better keep an eye on him. If he checks you out or flirts with you *when his friends aren't around*, he might be crushing on you. (Ask your friends what they think, too - they can be great boy-interpreters.) But if he just goes on acting in the same ol' jerky way, then don't do anything. You already did a great job of letting him know you're not in on his joke.

A word of (semi-related) advice: never, ever say anything important to a boy when his friends are listening. He won't tell you what he really feels - he'll only say what'll make him sound cool.

Why am I so nervous around my boyfriend?

Dear Advice Girl,

For some reason I get really nervous around my boyfriend. We haven't been going out long, but I've had a crush on him for months. It's hard to start a conversation with him, I'm too nervous, what do I do? I really like him and I want to stay in a relationship with him.

Your nervousness is left over from all those months when you were crushing on him – you were worried that he was too good for you and wouldn't like you back. Well, guess what? He *does* like you back. He thinks you're awesome and sweet and cute as a button.

The nervousness won't last forever: the more time you spend with him, the less you'll feel like you have to barf. Just try not to put too much pressure on your relationship. Take it slow, don't feel like you need to hang out with him every time he calls, keep a healthy balance between boyfriend-time and friend-time. And if you start to feel insecure, remind yourself of what an awesome girl you are. (You'd be awesome whether he liked you or not, but hey, it sure feels good to score your crush.)

How do I get a boyfriend this year?

Dear Advice Girl,

School is starting in a couple of weeks and I am absolutely determined to get a boyfriend this year. How should I do it?

Well, I must say I admire your gumption. (Do people even say “gumption” anymore? After 1876?) But you really can’t plan the time and date you’re gonna get a boyfriend. You just have to get yourself in the most confident state of mind...and then make sure that the boys are watching.

So how do you improve your odds of scoring a boyfriend – or at least of scoring a few looks in your direction? Here’s a back-to-school list that’s way more fun than the one your mom’s carting around Staples:

1. Get confident. It’s true what they say: if you know you’re awesome, then other people will start to see it, too. So how do you get there? Lots of ways – like by participating in stuff that you love, and by strengthening your relationships with your friends and family. A confidence-boosting makeover can’t hurt, either.

2. Get active. You won’t find any guys by hanging out on YouTube. Join some after-school activities (coed sports teams and the drama club are especially flirty), get a part-time job or volunteering gig, schedule nights out with friends. Too busy with schoolwork to do any of that stuff? Well, you must get pretty good grades, then. Maybe you could form a study group with some of your (cuter) classmates.

3. Don’t be afraid to be bold. Hey, it’s only high school. Step outside of your comfort zone a little. Raise your hand more, volunteer to be the group leader, say “hi” in the hallways to people you’re not even that good of friends with. Little by little, this stuff will make you more comfortable around people, even cute guys. You’ll naturally start flirting with your crushes – and who knows, maybe one (or *all*) of them will start crushing back on you.

My bf wants to be with me forEVER!

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend and I have been going out for 5 months. I really love him with all my heart but sometimes I feel like this is it. He has all these big plans for the future and it involves us lasting a VERY long time. But I keep thinking that now everything is falling into place and I’m not gonna get to do all the things I wanted to accomplish in my life cos of our “big plan” that he’s made. What do you think about this?

Your boy can plan your future together down to the very last formal dinnerware set, but the only way it's gonna come true is if you go along with it. Smile and nod your head like you've been doing, and you'll end up with his version of the future (well, provided your relationship lasts long enough, which it probably won't). But that wouldn't be fair to yourself, your dreams, and even your boyfriend. So be very clear to him about what you expect out of this relationship. If you're more of a "let's take it slow" kind of gal, let him know.

If your boy really loves you, he'll respect your opinions. And if he gets angry with you and puts up a fight, well, I guess now you know what to expect out of the next 60 years of living with him.

Where should my bf and I go on summer dates?

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend and I have been going out for about two months now, and when we hang out we always have a great time. The problem is that we can't seem to think of places to hang out at, it's always the mall or the movies, and we're both pretty sick of those. There's not much to do at my house, and his parents don't want me hanging out at his house yet. Where are some places that we can hang out at, that we haven't already been to? Are you kidding? It's the summertime! What the heck are you doing at the mall? Run out of there as fast as you can and take advantage of the sunshine – it's the perfect weather for romantic dates with your boy. Try out some of these:

- Hit the beach (of course). If you don't live by one, head to a public pool or water park instead.
- Spend the day at the park playing frisbee or walking a nature trail. (Extra points if you bring a picnic basket.)
- Nerd out at your favorite destinations from your childhood, like the mini-golf course and the zoo.
- If you both have bikes, take some rides together. Pick a different route every time and aim for destinations like fun new restaurants and coffee shops.
- Keep checking for special events in your town, like food fests, free concerts, carnivals and art fairs.
- If you *must* go to the mall, try an outdoor one instead, or a downtown commercial district. Shopping's shopping, but a new locale will at least be more interesting than your boring old neighborhood mall.

Stay active with your boy all summer and by the time the cold weather hits, you'll be too wiped out to do anything but cuddle. (Hopefully by that time his folks will finally let you past their front door.)

My boyfriend is *too* perfect!

Dear Advice Girl,

I love my boyfriend with all my heart, but he's too perfect. He gets straight A's, does charity, goes to church every Sunday, spends time with his family, cares for his grandpa, works and does a ton of other things. It makes me feel that I have to be perfect. What should I do?

There are lots of “good” people out there. They're smart, they're kind to their elders, and they never get any sauce on their faces when they're eating ribs.

It's easy to get intimidated by them (or even dislike them) for how easy they seem to have it, but please don't. When someone intimidates you, it's only because there's something about yourself that you don't like. (Think about it - it's true!)

So instead of getting upset about Mr. Perfect, try to learn from him.

You're feeling insecure because your boy always goes to church? Then tag along with him next Sunday. You're jealous of his perfect grades? Let it motivate you to study hard and bring up your *own* grades. It'll help you feel better about yourself – and it'll prove to you that your boy isn't a superhero. He's just a good person who sticks to his goals, which is something we can all aspire to be.

How do I handle my bitchy boyfriend?

Dear Advice Girl,

How do I handle a bipolar boyfriend who isn't fair and calls me a bitch all the time? Please don't give me the whole “you should just dump him” speech because that isn't as easy as people make it sound.

So you want an easy solution? Okay, here's the low-effort, low-stress, low-calorie way out of your problem:

“Sorry, dude, it's not working out. I think it's time we went our separate ways.”

Now, is that so hard? Before you scream that it is, please tell me what you think would be better. Staying with a guy who's mean to you and calls you names? You know he's not “the one,” so you'll have to break up with him eventually – you're better off doing it soon, before you have to endure another two months of his mind games and dirty words.

Don't get me wrong – I'm all for putting in some effort to save a failing relationship, especially if that relationship includes a baby, a mortgage or a timeshare in Maui. But

you're young, you're free and there are way better people out there for you to date. So rip off the Band-aid already.

Should I tell him about my past hookups?

Dear Advice Girl,

My new bf isn't from my school. He knows me, but not A LOT about me. I mean, he doesn't know about my past bf's. I feel like I should tell him I have dated another guy recently cuz I hooked up with him the week after me and my bf broke up.

I know, I seem like a jerk right now. But it's easy to get over someone who you hate now and it's easier to like someone who is nice and the best thing in the world compared your ex! I feel like I should tell him but I don't think it's necessary and I don't wanna get in a fight!

The best advice I can give you for your relationship with your boy – and for everyone's relationship with everybody – is to be honest. Lying (or hiding the truth) only works up until the time that the truth comes out. And when it does (PS: it *always* does), it can be a real bitch to set things right again.

That doesn't mean you have to sit your new guy down and tell him about all the guys you've ever made out with (ick). But you should make it a habit of telling him whatever's on your mind - and your ex is clearly still on your mind.

So dish it out already. If he's angry, it'll mostly be because you kept it a secret for so long. And if he's upset or weirded out, don't worry – he won't be forever. It sounds like the two of you have a great thing going on, and he's not gonna risk screwing that up just 'cause of an ex-boyfriend.

Was it a date or wasn't it?

Dear Advice Girl,

Last weekend this guy I like (my best guy friend) invited me to go to the movies with him, and he paid for everything (I'm usually the one who pays when we hang out). And I sometimes get the feeling that he likes me as well, but I'm not positive. How do I know for sure if it was a date or not?

If three or more of the following are true, then it's a date:

- Dude asks you to go to the movies. *Just the two of you.*
- Dude doesn't invite you while you're hanging out with your pals or are already saying

things like, “Wouldn’t it be great to go see *Knocked Up* sometime?” He calls you up, emails or texts you *specifically* to ask you out.

- Dude pays for your ticket. He even offers to buy you Sour Patch Kids.
- Dude’s acting a little more awkward around you than he usually does, even though he sees you every day in school and has never had a problem looking you in the eye or hitting you in the back of the head with a mechanical pencil.
- Dude acts *especially* awkward when the movie’s over. He’s nervous about what to do next and is hoping you’ll take control of the evening from here on out.
- Dude smells suspiciously like Axe deodorant spray.

The odds are, you’ve got a date on your hands. Have fun on date #2, and let me know how it goes!

My gf won't tell her dad about me!

Dear Advice Girl,

I’m in a long distance relationship with this girl. She hasn’t told her dad about me. I really want her to tell, but she thinks she’s gonna get in trouble and I don’t want that to happen.

I don’t know what to do. Should I do something, or should I wait for her to choose what to do herself?

Family stuff always comes before relationship stuff, always. It’s not your place to interfere with the way your girlfriend deals with her dad, no matter how much it’s bugging you.

I know, it’s frustrating, ‘cause you’re all like, “Why doesn’t she just tell her folks about me? Is she ashamed of me? If she’s gonna get in trouble, don’t I mean enough to her that I’d be worth the risk?” (I mean, I *hope* you’re thinking those things, or else I just gave you some whole new stuff to worry about.)

But those questions are irrelevant. The reasons for her keeping quiet are between her and her family, and they have a lot less to do with you than you think. Your only business is to be the best boyfriend you can be. Concentrate on that and your relationship will stay strong. (Unless her dad comes after you with a two-by-four, in which case, your relationship’s pretty much over.)

Do you think he'll break up with me?

Dear Advice Girl,

I have a really cute boyfriend, right? Well, a girl at school who likes him keeps emailing him and telling him to break up with me...but I love him! Do u think he would break up with me? I mean, he kisses me at every chance...and we talk online, but...I need help!

Bad news: there's no way to protect your boyfriend from fiendish, flirty girls. It's one of the risks you take when you date. Just like you can't keep your boy locked up in your closet (though wouldn't *that* make being grounded a lot more fun), you can't hide him away from the general female population. You've gotta just set him free and hope he makes the right decisions.

So, is your boy doing the right thing? Depends on how he responds to this girl's emails. If he tells her to mind her own business, you're in his heart – but if he's polite to her and always writes back, he may be looking to stray. Don't know how he replies? Ask him. But if he's still kissing and loving on you the way he's always done, you probably don't need to worry.

I'm worried he's hitting on other girls!

Dear Advice Girl,

Every time my boyfriend goes out, I worry that he's hitting on other girls. One time I saw him getting hit on and he didn't even mention to her that he had a gf.

I wouldn't be so concerned about, it but he checks out every girl when we're hanging out and it lowers my self esteem. He swears I'm the only girl for him but I can't help but worry when he's constantly checking out girls and letting them flirt with him. What should I do?

Sorry, but this guy's a dog. You've given him a bunch of chances to change his ways, and he won't even admit he's doing anything wrong. Shoot – he even hits on girls *in front of you*.

If you think he respects you or wants you to be his only girl, you're wrong. Get rid of him and go on a flirting rampage of your own.

He caught me flirting on myspace!

Dear Advice Girl,

I've been dating this great guy I love with all my heart. Three months into it, he asked if he could see my myspace and I said yes. Once he did, he found out I was flirting with someone else. We broke up and got back together 2 days later. We are still together...but

when I tell him I love him, he tells me to “prove it.” Is there any way I can gain his trust back?? I’m sorry, but if you really loved him with all your heart, you wouldn’t have been flirting with another boy. (Especially not on *myspace*, where everyone can see it.) If it takes you three more months to earn back his trust, well, that’s a pretty good punishment. You should just be thankful he hasn’t lost his faith in you completely.

Next time, don’t flirt with other boys. Or at least have the decency to do it in private.

I flirt with boys to make my BF jealous!

Dear Advice Girl,

Whenever I see my boyfriend I always try 2 make him jealous by talking 2 other boys. Do you think that gets him pissed?

I don’t know – are you *trying* to get him pissed? And if you’re trying to get him pissed, good lord, *why*?

Shoot, I’m sorry – I already know why. You want to make him jealous because you’re insecure about his feelings for you. You think if he sees you flirting around, he’ll want you more. You’re afraid of being nice to him, 'cause it’ll make you feel vulnerable. And then *he’ll* be able to hurt *you*.

So, you want to know if the crappy treatment’s working? Well, I’m sure it is. Pretty soon he’ll be so annoyed at your bad behavior that he’ll break up with you. I don’t know if you’ll get what you want, but you’ll definitely get what you deserve.

Should I choose my BF or my sister?

Dear Advice Girl,

I have been with this guy for about 4 months now and I think I really like him. But he is my sister’s best friend. He stopped talking to her and now he talks to me a lot more. My sister got really mad and doesn’t like me with him. She told me to choose - her or him. Even though family comes first, I like him too much to let him go. What should I do...leave him or stay with him?

You’ve gotta sympathize with your sister a little bit. Think about it from her perspective: her best pal doesn’t hang out with her anymore, and her own flesh and blood is the reason why. She’s bitter at you for not putting family first, for practically *choosing* to hurt her.

Are those feelings justified? Well, not completely. After all, you have feelings of your own – and it’s not fair to make you break off a great relationship just so she’ll feel better. Family *does* come first, but it goes both ways – your sis has to respect *your* feelings, too.

So hold onto your boy, but start to be a whole lot more sympathetic to your sister from now on. Tell her that you'll always be sisters, regardless of whom either of you hang out with or date. Encourage your boy to hang out with her, both with and without you. And leave room for plenty of sisters-only time, too. Throughout your life, boyfriends will come and go, but if you and your sis love and respect each other, your relationship will outlast all of them.

My boyfriend doesn't call me that much!

Dear Advice Girl,

Well I have a boyfriend, right? And he always talks to me really bad and tells me stuff that isn't even true and well, now he kinda doesn't call me that much. What should I do?

Thanks! You've given me the perfect opportunity to teach you all a little lesson:

Believe it or not, **sometimes you can be happier without a boyfriend.**

It sounds obvious, right? Still, so many of us are weirdly convinced that even a bad boyfriend is better than no boyfriend.

Girls. Please. If you're with a dude who lies to you, treats you badly and doesn't call when he said he would, don't kid yourself that things are gonna get better. Get single, quick.

Yeah, it's a bummer to have to say goodbye to a cute boy, but trust me, there's plenty other cute boys out there. Don't commit to any of them until they've proved that they can make you happy.

We're not "officially" dating, you know?

Dear Advice Girl,

Me and this girl at church aren't "officially" going out, but we still do the things as dating couples do. Well, she is upset because when people ask if I am her boyfriend, she feels uncomfortable because she doesn't know how to "address" our relationship.

We've liked each other for a while now, but I would feel awkward to go up and be like, "will you go out with me?" or, "will you be my girlfriend?" How should I approach her?

You know how she gets upset that she can't answer the "Is Sean your boyfriend?" question? And then she tells you about it? That's her way of saying, "I wanna be your girlfriend, but I'm too afraid to come out and say it - 'cause maybe you'll think I'm

moving too fast.”

So just come out and ask her to be your girlfriend. Yes, it'll be an awkward conversation, but you'll both feel a lot better if you get it out of the way.

I don't know if I should date him!

Dear Advice Girl,

I really like this guy and I know he likes me to. The problem is that I don't know whether to start dating him because I have college and family to deal with.

Relationships don't have to take up all your time – just as much time as you want to put into it. And if you find the right guy, he'll always be worth your time. Even if he's *not* the right guy, it's still worth it to take a chance and find that out.

Agree to date him, but tell him you want to take it slowly. If he thinks *you're* worth it, he'll sacrifice some time for you, too.

Is it too early to say I love you?

Dear Advice Girl,

My boyfriend and I have only been dating for one week and he's already saying I love you. This morning I said it back and I'm sure I meant it. But do you think it's too early to say it? All my friends think so.

It all depends, my dear, on how you define love. If you think love is crazy attraction, awesome conversations and thinking about each other every second of the day, then yes, you can feel love after only a week.

But personally, I think love is more than that. I think it's about trust, surviving through rough times, and being able to have huge differences but still get along, even when things are kinda boring. *That* kind of love can only come after months or even years.

Your own feelings about love may change over time. But for now, if you think that what you're feeling is love, then go ahead and shout it from the rooftops. Whatever you wanna call it, it's an awesome feeling. Enjoy it!

I wanna cheat on my boyfriend!

Dear Advice Girl,

Me and my boyfriend have been going out for two months, and my cousin used a screen name to see if he was cheating on me - and he's loyal. I'm used to having cheating boyfriends, but now that I have a loyal person I want more than one boyfriend. What should I do?

If you respect your guy at *all* (and you probably don't, since you had your cousin try to ambush him), don't cheat on him.

All your past relationships might lead you to believe that cheating is a normal, inevitable thing. But that's not true - there's plenty of honest relationships out there.

If you're not ready to be in one, then break up with your boyfriend and go solo for a while. There's a time and a place for flirting crushing on multiple guys. It's called *being single*.

My BF thinks I'm dangerous!

Dear Advice Girl,

Three months ago, I started dating this guy, and he is really sweet and funny and I love being with him. However, he claims he has abandonment issues and worries that he's going to lose me. He really likes safety and security. I like skydiving, river rafting and swimming with sharks. He thinks I like these things because I don't care if I live or die, but on the contrary I love life and want to enjoy it.

He is also asking for a lot more commitment than I want to give right now. I'm still young and I want enjoy it. I want to be with him but I don't want to be tied down, but he wants the safety and security of knowing he has someone to be with.

I'm sorry, but as much as you like him, it's just not a match. At least not at this stage in your life. What you want right now is adventure and freedom, and he's not willing to give you that stuff without a fight. You can't give him anywhere close to what *he* wants, either. Not to mention, it sounds like you have way different interests, and he doesn't understand or respect yours at all. So what's the point of struggling through all the arguments and misunderstandings?

Cut him loose so he can find the safe, secure girlfriend of his dreams. Then celebrate your new freedom with some great whites.

Why do my first dates always suck?

Dear Advice Girl,

In the last three years I've had four first dates that were all identical.

We go somewhere casual like a coffee shop, we have a cool talk and a few good laughs, we run out of stuff to talk about, I offer to take her to the movies, but as soon as we get there, she just clams up, arms crossed, legs crossed, eyes glued to the screen. I can't get near her! The date ends with a cold hug, a promise to meet again, and a dumping text message within the week!

Please, Advice Girl, what am I doing wrong?!

The movies can be an intimidating place for a girl on a date. (I don't think I need to explain why.)

(Well, okay, it's 'cause of...you know...expectations. About what's supposed to happen in the last row of the movie theater. Whether *you*, Richard, had those intentions in mind or not. And since you were trying to "get near" her, I'm guessing you did.)

Try taking your dates to places that are more activity-oriented - like amusement parks, concerts, putt putt, ice skating, that sort of thing. It'll take some of the pressure off of making conversation (first dates at coffee shops can lead to *sooo* many awkward silences), and it won't make her think you're trying to lay down some moves.

And please, Richard, *don't* lay down the moves. A tasteful hug or kiss when you're saying good-bye is the only physical contact you need on a first date – you can save everything else for date #47.

Source <http://www.espin.com/>