



"Christ, how many times must I tell you: wide collar, double Windsor!"

Sign Language

Women are constantly sending signals that they want to be more than friends. You've just been too blind to notice.

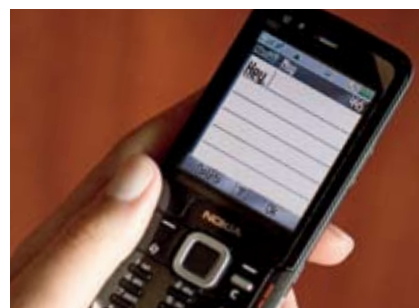
A few months ago, my sister asked me to show her friend Tim* around New York City—he was coming to town for work and didn't know a soul. Over dinner I laughed at his jokes. At a bar I introduced him to my friends and let him pay for my drinks in return for playing tour guide. When the night was over, I went to shake his hand—but Tim dove in for the make-out session. "Er, *wrong*," I said, pushing him off. "But you were all over me all night!" he responded, lunging in again. I threatened to blind him with my key chain laser pointer (my only "weapon"!) and walked away mystified. In my mind, I'd been nothing more than polite with him; in his mind, I'd been hoping to do the no-pants dance all night.

Of course, this wasn't the first time a man had misread me. I've even been on the other side of the fence, dying for a guy to recognize that I want him to rip my clothes off, but then trudging home alone. So in the name of avoiding further confusion between the sexes, I conducted some research and asked 25 women to reveal the surefire signals they send when they want to take a relationship from platonic to physical. Take note: If a female acquaintance drops one of the eight hints listed below, it's your cue to exit the friend zone and make a move, pronto.

SHE STRIKES A POSE

Women are well aware of what our best assets are, and normally we hide them to avoid creepy ogling eyes. But if seductive curves start popping out where you haven't noticed them before—or if she starts contorting her body in strange and seemingly uncomfortable ways when you're around—it's all part of a conscious move to attract you. "I do this thing with my arm where I'll position it under my chest to make my breasts pop up and out. That's my sign that I'm ready to fuck," says Jill, a 30-year-old teacher. Other women have even more elaborate orchestrated moves to keep you focused on them—and thinking dirty thoughts. Maggie, a 26-year-old paralegal, has a signature move she describes as "coffee tongue." "I was dying to sleep with a coworker, so every morning I'd stop by his desk to chat and blow on my coffee, then stick my tongue into it to test it. Finally, one day he e-mailed me after I walked away: 'It's pretty cruel how you tease me like that.' Two e-mails later we were having a wildly intense quickie in a supply closet."

SHE TECH-FLIRTS



It's hard enough understanding what the hell women are talking about when they're standing in front of you. When technology is involved—and there's no body language or facial expressions to go on—picking up on her subtle cues can be near impossible. Know this: Cyberstalking is a sport women have perfected, so if a girl you met at night finds your online profile the next day and starts posting messages, she wants to be more than just friends.

When it comes to interpreting her flirty texts, the shorter the better. In fact, if you get a one-word text from a girl you know, it's safe to say it's on: HI. HEY. YO. ;). They're all just code for, "Let's cut to the chase and screw." Think of it as electronic eye contact. Worked for me: I once texted a guy while we were out at a bar: DUDE. He typed back, DUDE, and we were feverishly sucking face within the hour. ➤

SHE TALKS ABOUT SEX—A LOT



There are some things a woman only shares with her girlfriends. So if she suddenly starts demonstrating her oral technique on a banana, she may have ulterior motives. "I once told a group of people at a bar that I was turned on by anal sex," says Lisa, a 28-year-old publicist. "A guy I liked was there, and I wanted him to know I was no-holds-barred in bed." The overshare worked. "When I got up to leave, he ran after me and started making out with me in the street." Look out for material beyond the "I can tie a cherry stem with my tongue" trick. The key is when she starts dishing personal dirt—like her tale about the time she was busted with her teeny lace thong around her ankles in a bar bathroom, getting head up against the sink. She just might be hoping for a reenactment.

SHE PLAYS DAMSEL IN DISTRESS



Most women hate to put themselves in the role of the powerless female (we can program the TiVo, thanks), but if we're really into you, we're going to ask for your help with something—to get some time alone. "I asked a friend I had the hots for to help me move," says Mary, a 26-year-old student. "When he arrived, I said I needed his opinion on whether I should keep a few items of clothing. I modeled them for him, making sure to keep the bedroom door ajar as I was changing. Finally, he came in while I was undressing and we attacked each other on the bare mattress." Margaret, a 29-year-old nurse, once asked her musician friend for one-on-one guitar lessons. "He sat behind me and placed his fingers over mine," she says. "We both got so turned on...I never did learn how to play."

SHE PUSHES YOUR BUTTONS



When a woman is nothing but nice to you, she thinks you're, well, nothing but nice—not intriguing, not sexy. But if a hot girl suddenly starts being playfully nasty, she may be trying to send you a message. "I like to get really sarcastic and bust a guy's balls if I'm attracted to him," says Ellen, a 30-year-old retailer. "That's what guys do to each other, so I want him to know I can speak his language." Mocking you is our way of indicating we're down-to-earth, not prissy and aloof, so you'll be comfortable hanging with—and banging—us. "Teasing is an expression of confidence," explains sex therapist Megan Fleming, Ph.D. "But it's also a safe way to flirt and figure out if he's interested. If he's not, she can act like she was just kidding around with a pal."

SHE PICKS AT YOU



No, not nagging. This move is straight from the animal kingdom: Women who want to sleep with you will groom you, just like birds preen one another's feathers or monkeys pick at each other's hair. "Plucking lint off a guy's sweater or brushing a crumb off his face is a great way to touch him without coming on too strong," says Julie, a 29-year-old marketing exec. "It's strictly something I do with men I'm attracted to, though. If it's just a regular dude, I'm happy to let him sit there with mayo on his upper lip." According to Fleming, women also do this to mark territory. "A girl will leave her perfume on you or brush her hair or skin against you as a way of saying, 'You're mine,'" she says. So what seems like an innocent gesture could be the sign of a predator about to take you down.

SHE FAKES IT



Men have been known to suffer through three hours of ballet or an excruciating Dixie Chicks concert for women they're trying to screw. We're no different. If a girl really wants you, she's going to make sure she shares your interests, even if she secretly hates them. "I spent six months falling on my face trying to learn snowboarding because this guy I liked was into it," says Mara, a 31-year-old doctor. "Thank God it paid off—on one fall I sprained my wrist, so we spent the rest of the weekend holed up in the lodge drinking and fucking by the fire." So how can you tell if you two are genuinely bonding over the awesomeness of '80s hair metal or if she's just pretending? Test her. If she can't name two guitarists in Ratt, it's you, not your God-awful music collection, she's after.

SHE DOES HER PARTY TRICKS



Just as men can recite 30-minute stretches of *Reservoir Dogs*, women have their own special hidden talents to show off—but only for guys we want to sleep with. "I went to school in Japan," says Michelle, a 26-year-old chef. "If I want to get a guy into bed, I take him to karaoke and sing in Japanese. People are always hugely impressed. It's worked on four different guys." Abby, a 24-year-old artist, has an even more unusual stunt: "I attended down school years ago and can still pull off a couple tricks—one is plate spinning, and the other is sword swallowing. You can guess which one men like more." Fleming calls this behavior the peacock effect: "She wants to really stand apart from other women." So that karate chop she just demonstrated on a block of cement? An invitation, not a threat.

Smoke Signals

If a beautiful girl does any of the following 10 things, you might start thinking she wants you. You might be wrong.



1. She backs her ass up into you while dancing.

All this means is that she's had about eight Red Bull and vodkas and the DJ just put on some Lil Jon. *What! Ye-ah!*



2. She invites you to brunch.

A rule of thumb: Eggs and coffee never lead to the bedroom. Brunch after sex, yes; brunch before sex, never.



3. She calls you hysterically crying.

You think by getting intimate with her feelings, she's showing she wants to be intimate in other ways. Reality: She'd never let on to a guy she wants to sleep with that she's teetering on the edge of sanity.



4. She compliments you on your sweet new shoes or shades.

She's not noticing you, she's noticing new pretty, shiny, fashionable things.



5. She asks you for sex advice.

She's just trying to find out what that other guy she's going to blow enjoys.



6. She bums a smoke.

You're psyched about a few precious minutes alone; she's suffering your company to feed her soul-crushing addiction.



7. She meets you for drinks wearing sneakers and a ratty old tee.

This is not an attempt to show you her cute sporty look. She honestly doesn't give a shit whether you find her attractive.



8. She flirts with you—sometimes.

If she goes hot and cold, don't kid yourself: She's not playing hard to get; she's just keeping you hanging on in case she can't get anyone she likes better.



9. She invites you to a boring event, like a play.

Could *Mamma Mia!* be so excruciating that no one else would go with her? Bingo.



10. She seductively eats a banana or ice cream cone in front of you.

Sorry, guy, but there's just no other way to eat these things.

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