

THE ULTIMATE REVISED EDITION

The
Joy of
Sex

DR. ALEX COMFORT



THE TIMELESS GUIDE TO LOVEMAKING

For Cambria, whence it all began

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preface by Alex Comfort

I am a physician and human biologist for whom the natural history of human sexuality is of as much interest as the rest of human natural history. As with the rest of human natural history, I had notes on it. My wife encouraged me to bring biology into medicine, and my old medical school had no decent textbook to teach a human sexuality course.

Joy was compiled and, very importantly, illustrated, just after the end of that daft and extraordinary non-statute in Western society, the Sexual Offences Act. For at least two hundred years, the description, and above all the depiction, of this most familiar and domestic group of activities, and of almost everything associated with them, had been classified. When, in the sixteenth century, Giulio Romano engraved his weightily classical pictures showing sixteen ways of making love, and Aretino wrote poems to go with them, a leading ecclesiastic opined that the artist deserved to be crucified. The public, apparently, thought otherwise (“Why”, said Aretino, “should we not look upon that which pleases us most?”) and *Aretino’s Postures* have circulated surreptitiously ever since, but even in 1950s Britain pubic hair had to be airbrushed out to provide a smooth and featureless surface.

People today, who never experienced the freeze on sexual information, won’t appreciate the propositions of the transformation when it ended – it was like ripping down the Iron Curtain. My immediate predecessor in writing about domestic sex, Dr. Eustace Chesser, was (unsuccessfully) prosecuted for his low-key, unillustrated book *Love Without Fear*, and even in 1972 there was still some remaining doubt about whether *Joy* would be banned by the Thought Police.

The main aim of “sexual bibliotherapy” (writing books like this one) was to undo some of the mischief caused by the guilt, misinformation, and lack of information. That kind of reassurance is still needed. I have asked various people – chiefly older couples – whether *The Joy of Sex* told them things they didn’t know, or reassured them about things they knew and already did or would like to do. I have had both answers. One can now read books and see pictures devoted to sexual behavior almost without limitation in democratic countries, but it takes more than a few decades and a turnover of generations to undo centuries of misinformation; and of this material, much is anxious or hostile or over the top. People who worried, when the book first came out, if they did some of the things described in it may now worry if they don’t do all of them. That we can’t help, nor the fact that the same people who went to doctors because of sexual fear and inhibition under the old dispensation now go complaining of sexual indigestion under the new.

Sexual behavior probably changes remarkably little over the years – sexual revolutions and moral backlashes chiefly affect the degree of frankness or reticence about what people do in private; the main contributor to any sexual revolution in our own time, insofar as it affects behavior, has not been frankness but the advent of

reliable contraception, which makes it possible to separate the reproductive and recreational uses of sexuality. Where unanxious books dealing as accurately as possible with the range of sexual behaviors are most valuable is in encouraging the sexually active reader – who both wants to enjoy sex and to be responsible about it – and in aiding the helping professions to avoid causing problems to their clients. It is only recently, as ethology has replaced psychoanalytic theory, that counselors have come to realize that sex, besides being a serious interpersonal matter, is a deeply rewarding form of play. Children are not encouraged to be embarrassed about their play; adults often have been and are still. So long as play is not hostile, cruel, unhappy, or limiting, they need not be.

One of the most important uses of play is in expressing a healthy awareness of sexual equality. This involves letting both sexes take turns in controlling the game; sex is no longer what men do to women and women are supposed to enjoy. Sexual interaction is sometimes a loving fusion, sometimes a situation where each is a “sex object” – maturity in sexual relationships involves balancing, rather than denying, the personal and impersonal aspects of arousal. Both are essential and built-in to humans. For anyone who is short on either of these elements, play is the way to learn: men learn to stop domineering and trying to perform; women discover that they can take control in the give-and-take of the game rather than by nay-saying. If they achieve this, Man and Woman are one another’s best friends in the very sparks they strike from one another.

This book has changed considerably since its first edition and it will be revised again in the future as knowledge increases. What will not change is the central importance of unanxious, responsible, and happy sexuality in the lives of normal people. For what they need – in a culture that does not learn skills and comparisons in this area of living by watching – is accurate and unbothered information. The availability of this, and public resistance to the minority of disturbed people who for so long limited it, is an excellent test of the degree of liberty and concern in a society, reflected in the now-old injunction to make love, not war. It is a socially relevant test today.

Alex Comfort, M.B., D.Sc., 1991

preface by Susan Quilliam

I am a relationships psychologist and sexologist whose lifetime aim, through a variety of expert roles, has been to help people enhance their emotional and sexual partnerships. So when the publishers of *The Joy of Sex* approached me to “reinvent” the book for the twenty-first century, it seemed to me the fulfillment of everything I have been working for.

I well remember the original publication of *Joy*, and the awed giggles with which I and my friends read, discussed, and then put into practice its suggestions. So I know firsthand what over the decades proved to be true: *Joy* is an astonishing and inspirational child of its age, born not only out of social but also political changes that irreversibly altered the sexual landscape for individuals, couples, and society. Barely a decade before the book’s 1972 publication, the contraceptive pill had, for the first time in history, enabled women to have control over their own fertility. In its wake came increased female education, emancipation, and self-belief, as well as a whole host of liberalizations, sexual and social – increasing permissiveness, more frequent cohabitation, easier divorce, more available erotica, and gay rights.

Joy was not only a product of this revolution, it also helped create it. Dr. Alex Comfort’s aim was to write the first book that gave readers accurate knowledge about sexuality, and permission to use that knowledge. The text and illustrations were designed to both reassure the reader that their sexuality was normal and to offer further possibilities with which to expand their sexual menu. He was hugely effective in his intention – 8.5 million copies of *The Joy of Sex* have been sold to date and it has been translated into fourteen languages. More than that, it was a key influence on the social changes of the late twentieth century and has been a byword for sexual vision ever since.

Why, then, reinvent? There have already been content revisions, in the author’s lifetime and after his death in 2000, the most recent being the highly successful thirtieth-anniversary edition by Alex’s son Nicholas Comfort. But the very changes that *Joy* itself wrought in society have meant that the book has come to need updating in a more fundamental way. This was my task – to re-create *The Joy of Sex* for the contemporary world; to do what Alex Comfort would have done had he been writing today.

The majority of the text remains the same, but substantial additions have been made. Many of these are informational; there have been countless key scientific discoveries in recent years in the fields of physiology, psychology, psychotherapy, and medicine, while the advent of sexology – the specialist study of sexual matters – has resulted in both rigorous academic research and a more widespread public awareness of, and skill in, sex.

Alongside these informational updates, a great deal of refocusing has been necessary to reflect social shifts. An intimate relationship is a very different animal from what it was in 1972. It’s now largely expected that sex will be part of every love partnership,

that bedroom activity will include practices previously considered outrageous, and that these practices will be informed and often suggested via a new raft of technological advances. It's acknowledged that a woman can lead just as much as a man, both in bed and out of it – one reason why the publisher chose a woman to reinvent the book. And it is, albeit slowly, now acknowledged that a couple's sex life lasts well into their later years and increases, rather than decreases, in quality.

Yet along with all these positive developments has come a flurry of problems that weren't predicted in the heady days of 1972. Pressure to have sex; regret that one has had sex; worry that one isn't sufficiently beautiful to deserve sex; worry that one isn't having enough sex or enough good sex. And all that is set beside high rates of pregnancy, abortion, and sexually transmitted infections. In the twenty-first century, as we hastily adapt to a society arguably more sexualized than any previous one, it's a wild world out there.

All of which is why the many changes made to *Joy* have been underpinned by what remains the same – an absolute yet pragmatic optimism around sexuality and its place in our lives. Running throughout the original book was a rock-solid seam of positivity that sex is a good thing and that mature adults, given the right information and inspiration, can be trusted to treat it as such. Despite the headlines and scare stories, I still deeply believe in what Alex Comfort proposed – that sex should be and can be a total joy.

I have loved reinventing the book because Alex Comfort's values and aims are also mine. I too want to present knowledge in an accessible form. To encourage mature decision-making and offer the skills and strategies to do it. To protest attempts to enforce inhibitions on human sexuality. To see sex as the ultimate in human play, but at the same time a developmental essential that helps us grow as people and partners. Above all, to give people not just the technicalities, the fripperies, or the “junk food” of sexual literature, but an intelligent, thoughtful, and “gourmet” treatment of the topic.

In the end I return to, and repeat in my own voice, Alex Comfort's words from his first preface. My intention and my hope is that this book will “benefit ... the ordinary, sexually active reader – eager to both enjoy sexuality and to be tender and responsible with it.” True in 1972. Just as true today.

Susan Quilliam, 2008



i like my body when it is with your
body. It is so quite new a thing.
Muscles better and nerves more.
i like your body. i like what it does,
i like its hows. i like to feel the spine
of your body and its bones, and the trembling
-firm-smooth ness and which i will
again and again and again
kiss, i like kissing this and that of you,
i like, slowly stroking the, shocking fuzz
of your electric fur, and what-is-it comes
over parting flesh.... And eyes big love-crumbs,

and possibly i like the thrill

of under me you so quite new

e. e. cummings









on gourmet lovemaking



All of us, barring any physical limitations, are able to dance and sing – after a fashion. This, if you think about it, summarizes the justification for learning to make love. Love, in the same way as singing, is something to be taken spontaneously. On the other hand, the difference between Pavlova and the Palais de Danse, or opera and barbershop singing, is much less than the difference between sex as our recent ancestors came to accept it and sex as it can be.

At least we recognize this now (so that instead of worrying if sex is sinful, most people now worry whether they are “getting satisfaction” – one can worry about anything, given the determination). And there are now enough books about the basics; we are largely past the point of people worrying about the normality, possibility, and variety of sexual experience. This book is slightly different, in that there are now enough people who have those basics and want more depth of understanding, solid ideas, and inspiration.

To draw a parallel, chef-grade cooking doesn’t happen naturally: it starts at the point where people know how to prepare and enjoy food, are curious about it and willing to take trouble preparing it, read recipe hints, and find they are helped by one or two techniques. It’s hard to make mayonnaise by trial and error, for instance. Gourmet sex, as we define it, is the same – the extra one can get from comparing notes, using some imagination, trying way-out or new experiences, when one already is making satisfying love and wants to go on from there.

This book will likely attract four sorts of readers. First, there are those who don’t fancy it, find it disturbing, and would rather stay the way they are – these should put it down, accept our apologies, and stay the way they are. Second, there are those who are with the idea, but don’t like our choice of techniques – remember, it’s a menu, not a rulebook.

Third, most people will use our notes as a personal one-couple notebook from which they might get ideas. In this respect we have tried to stay wide open. One of the original aims of this book was to cure the notion, born of non-discussion, that common sex needs are odd or weird; the whole joy of sex-with-love is that there are no rules, so long as you enjoy, and the choice is practically unlimited. We have, however, left out long discussion of very specialized sexual preferences; people who like these know already what they want to try.

The final group of readers are the hardy experimentalists, bent on trying absolutely everything. They too will do best to read this exactly like a cookbook – except that sex is safer in this respect, between lovers, in that you can't get obese or atherosclerotic on it, or give yourself ulcers. The worst you can get, given sensible safety precautions, is sore, anxious, or disappointed. However, one needs a steady basic diet of quiet, loving, night-and-morning intercourse to stand this experimentation on, simply because, contrary to popular ideas, the more regular sex a couple has, the higher the deliberately contrived peaks – just as the more you cook routinely, the better and the more reliable banquets you can stage.



One specific group of readers deserves special note. If you are disabled in any way, don't stop reading. A physical disability is not an obstacle to fulfilling sex. In counseling disabled people, one repeatedly finds that the real disability isn't a mechanical problem but a mistaken idea that there is only one "right" – or enjoyable – way to have sex. The best approach is probably to go through the book with your partner, marking off the things you can do. Then pick something appealing that you think you can't quite do, and see if there is a strategy you can develop together. Talking to other couples where one partner has a problem similar to yours is another resource.

In sum, the people we are addressing are the adventurous and uninhibited lovers who want to find the limits of their ability to enjoy sex. That means we take some things for granted – having intercourse naked and spending time over it; being able and willing to make it last, up to a whole afternoon on occasion; having privacy; not being scared of things like genital kisses; not being obsessed with one sexual trick to the exclusion of all others; and, of course, loving each other.

As the title implies, this book is about love as well as sex: you don't get high-quality sex on any other basis – either you love each other before you come to want it, or, if you happen to get it, you love each other because of it, or both. Just as you can't cook without heat, you can't make love without feedback. By feedback, we mean the right mixture of stop and go, tough and tender, exertion and affection. This comes by empathy and long mutual knowledge. Anyone who expects to get this in a first attempt with a stranger is an optimist, or a neurotic – if they do, it's what used to be called love at first sight, and isn't expendable: "skill," or variety, is no substitute. Also, one can't teach tenderness.

The starting point of all lovemaking is close bodily contact; love has been defined as the harmony of two souls, and the contact of two epiderms. At the same time, we might

as well plan our menu so that we learn to use the rest of our equipment. That includes our feelings of identity, forcefulness, and so on, and all of our fantasy needs. Luckily, sex behavior in humans is enormously elastic (it has had to be, or we wouldn't be here), and also nicely geared to help us express most of the needs that society or our upbringing have corked up.

Elaboration in sex is something we need rather specially and it has the advantage that if we really make it work, it makes us more, not less, receptive to each other as people. This is the answer to anyone who thinks that conscious effort to increase our sex range is "mechanical" or a substitute for real human relationship – we may start that way, but it's an excellent entry to learning that we are people and relating to each other as such. There may be other places we can learn to express all of ourselves, and do it mutually, but there aren't many.



Those are the assumptions on which this book is based. Granted this, there are two modes of sex – the duet and the solo – and a good concert alternates between the two. The duet is a cooperative effort aiming at simultaneous orgasm, or at least one orgasm each, and complete, untechnically planned release. This, in fact, needs skill, and can be built up from more calculated "love-play" until doing the right thing for both of you becomes fully automatic. This is the basic sexual meal.

The solo, by contrast, is when one partner is the player and the other the instrument. The aim of the player is to produce results on the other's pleasure experience as extensive, unexpected, and generally wild as his or her skill allows – to blow them out of themselves. The player doesn't lose control, though he or she can get wildly excited by what is happening to the other. The instrument does lose control – in fact, with a responsive instrument and a skillful performer, this is the concerto situation – and if it ends in an uncontrollable ensemble, so much the better. All the elements of music and dance are involved – rhythm, mounting tension, tantalization, even forcefulness: "I'm like the executioner," said the lady in the Persian poem, "but where he inflicts intolerable pain I will only make you die of pleasure." There is indeed an element of infliction in the solo mode, which is why some lovers dislike it and others overdo it, but no major lovemaking is complete without some solo passages.

The antique idea of the woman as passive and the man as performer used to ensure that he would show off playing solos on her, and early marriage manuals perpetuated this idea. Today, she is herself the soloist par excellence, whether in getting him excited to start with, or in controlling him and showing off all her skills. Solo recitals are not, of course, necessarily separate from intercourse. Apart from leading into it, there are many coital solos – for the woman astride, for example – while mutual masturbation or genital

kisses can be fully fledged duets. Solo response can be electrifyingly extreme in the quietest people. Skilfully handled by someone who doesn't stop for yells of murder but does know when to stop, a woman can get orgasm after orgasm, and a man can be kept hanging just short of climax to the limit of human endurance. The solo-given orgasm, whether from her or from him, is unique – neither bigger nor smaller in either sex than a full duet but different; sharper but not so round. And most people who have experienced both like to alternate them. Trying to say how they differ is a little like describing wine. Differ they do, however, and much depends on cultivating and alternating them.



Top-level enjoyment doesn't have to be varied, it just often is. In fact, being stuck rigidly with one sex technique usually means anxiety. In this book we have not, for example, focused on coital postures to the exclusion of all else. The common positions are now familiar to most people from writing and pictures if not from trial – the more extreme ones, as a rule, should be spontaneous, but few of them have marked advantages. This explains the apparent emphasis in this book on extras – the “sauces and pickles.” That said, individuals who, through a knot in their psyche, are obliged to live on sauce and pickle only are unfortunate in missing the most sustaining part of the meal – exclusive obsessions in sex are very like living exclusively on horseradish sauce through allergy to beef; fear of horseradish sauce, however, as indigestible, unnecessary, and immature is another hang-up, namely puritanism.

One of the things still missing from the essence of sexual freedom is the unashamed ability to use sex as play. In the past, ideas of maturity were nearly as much to blame as old-style moralisms about what is normal or perverse. We are all immature, and have anxieties and aggressions. Coital play, like dreaming, may be a programmed way of dealing acceptably with these, just as children express their fears and aggressions in games. Adults are unfortunately afraid of playing games, dressing up, and acting scenes. It makes them self-conscious: something horrid might get out. In this regard, bed is the place to play all the games you have ever wanted to play – if adults could become less self-conscious about such “immature” needs, we should have fewer deeply anxious people. If we were able to transmit the sense of play that is essential to a full, enterprising, and healthily immature view of sex between committed people, we would be performing a mitzvah: playfulness is a part of love that could be a major contribution to human happiness.

But still the main dish is loving, un-self-conscious sexual pleasure of all kinds – long, frequent, varied, ending with both parties satisfied, but not so full they can't face another light course, and another meal in a few hours. The *pièce de résistance* is good old face-to-face matrimonial, the finishing-off position, with mutual orgasm, and

starting with a full day or night of ordinary tenderness. Other ways of making love are special in various ways, and the changes of timbre are infinitely varied – complicated ones are for special occasions, or special uses like holding off an over-quick male orgasm, or are things that, like pepper steak, are stunning once a year but not staples.



There are, after all, only two “rules” in good sex, apart from the obvious one of not doing things that are silly, antisocial, or dangerous. One is: “Don’t do anything you don’t really enjoy,” and the other is: “Find out your partner’s needs and don’t balk at them if you can help it.” In other words, a good giving and taking relationship depends on a compromise (so does going to a show – if you both want the same thing, fine; if not, take turns and don’t let one partner always dictate). This can be easier than it sounds, because unless their partner wants something they find actively off-putting, real lovers get a reward not only from their own satisfaction but also from seeing the other respond and become satisfied. Most wives who don’t like Chinese food will eat it occasionally for the pleasure of seeing a Sinophile husband enjoy it, and vice versa.

Partners who won’t do this over specific sex needs are usually balking not because they have tried it and it’s a turnoff (many experimental dishes are nicer than you expected), but through ignorance of the range of human needs, plus being scared if these include things like forcefulness, cultivating extragenital sensation, or role-playing, which previous social mythology pretended weren’t there. Reading a full list of the unscheduled accessory sex behaviors that some normal people find helpful might be thought a necessary preliminary to any extended sexual relationship.

Couples should match up their needs and preferences (though people don’t find these out at once); you won’t get to some of our suggestions or understand them until you have learned to respond. It’s a mistake to run so long as walking is such an enchanting and new experience, and you may be happy pedestrians who match automatically. Where a rethink really helps is at the point where you have gotten used to each other socially (sex needs aren’t the only ones that need matching up between people who live together), and feel that the surface needs repolishing. If you think that sexual relations are overrated, the surface does need repolishing, and you haven’t paid enough attention to the wider use of your sexual equipment as a way of communicating totally. The traditional expedient at the point where the surface gets dull is to trade in the relationship and start all over in an equally uninstructed attempt with someone else, on the off chance of getting a better match-up by random choice. This is emotionally wasteful, and you usually repeat the same mistakes; better by far to repolish.

As to practicalities, we suggest couples either read the book together or (perhaps even better) read it separately, marking passages for the other partner’s attention. This works

wonders if – as is often the case – you don't really talk easily about sexual needs, or are afraid of sounding tactless.

Finally, if you don't like the repertoire or if it doesn't square with yours, never mind; the aim of *The Joy of Sex* is to stimulate your creative imagination. Sex books can only suggest techniques in order to encourage you to experiment. You can preface your own ideas with “this is how we play it,” and play it your own way. But by that time, when you will have tried all your own creative sexual fantasies, you won't need books.



ingredients



tenderness



tenderness

a constant awareness of what your partner is feeling, plus the knowledge of how to heighten that feeling, gently, toughly, slowly, or fast

This, in fact, is what the whole book is about. It doesn't exclude extremely forceful games (though many people neither need nor want these), but it does exclude clumsiness, heavy-handedness, lack of feedback, spitefulness, and non-rapport generally. Tenderness is shown fully in the way you touch each other. What it implies at root is a constant awareness of what your partner is feeling, plus the knowledge of how

to heighten that feeling, gently, toughly, slowly, or fast, and this can only come from an inner state of mind between the two of you. No really tender person can simply turn over and go to sleep afterwards.

Many if not most inexperienced men, and some women, are just naturally clumsy – either through haste, anxiety, or lack of sensing how the other sex feels – so don't grab breasts, stick fingers into the vagina, bend the penis, or (and this goes for both sexes) misplace bony parts of your anatomy. More women respond to very light than to very heavy stimulation – just brushing pubic or skin hairs will usually do far more than a whole-hand grab. At the same time, don't be frightened – neither of you is made of glass. Women, by contrast, often fail to use enough pressure, especially in hand work, though the light, light variety is a sensation on its own.

Start very gently, making full use of the skin surface, and work up. Stimulus toleration in any case increases with sexual excitement and even hard blows can become excitants (though not for everyone). This loss of pain sense disappears almost instantly with orgasm, so don't go on too long, and be extra gentle as soon as he or she has come.

If we could teach tenderness, most of this book would be superseded. If you are really heavy-handed, a little practice with inanimate surfaces, dress fastenings, and so on will help. Strength is a turn-on in sex, but it isn't expressed in clumsy hand work, bear hugs, and brute force – at least not as starters. If there is a problem here, remember you both can talk.

Few people want to be in bed on any terms with a person who isn't basically tender, and most people are delighted to be in bed with the right person who is. The ultimate test is whether you can bear to find the person there when you wake up. If you are actually pleased, then you can be sure that you are onto the right thing.

nakedness



nakedness

the normal state for lovers who take their work at all seriously

The normal state for lovers who take their work at all seriously, at least as a basic requisite. They don't so much start clothed, and shed what they must, as start naked, and add any extras they need.

Nakedness doesn't mean lack of ornament. A woman may take off all her clothes, but put on all her jewels – the only practical need, as with wristwatches, is to see they don't catch or scratch. This is for daylight; it is difficult to sleep in them. For night, an

increase in the value put on lovemaking is probably the main reason that many people now sleep naked. The only exception may be after; warm bodies tend to stick, and a blotter worn by one or other can add to comfort.

Nudists used to be associated with health fanatics enjoying a strict regime of cold showers and vigorous sports. Now, thank goodness, a more relaxed attitude prevails. Today, nudity is natural, not a ritual.

Organized “nudism” in most countries is a family affair. This is probably a good idea; the nudity of one’s own parents can be worrying to some children, and shouldn’t be overdone. There is, however, a lot to be said for the opportunity to look at men and women in general under unforced conditions; it is the discharge of residual anxiety of this sort about our body acceptability that probably makes group nudity so relaxing, rather than the opportunity to get an all-over tan. There is also evidence that children brought up in a naturist environment may be more responsible when faced with sexual opportunities and asked to make sexual choices. You should be able to pick a naturist club to taste – they offer facilities for open-air nakedness, which are hard to organize at home, and are universally tough on sexual advances, which makes for an almost uniquely relaxed atmosphere.

women (by her for him)

Women, like men, have direct physical responses, sure – science proves that we get turned on just as much as you and as quickly; it's simply that traditionally we have been discouraged. But our triggers are different (breasts and skin first, please, not a direct grab at the clitoris), and can't be short-circuited. It matters to us who is doing what, far more than it does to most men. The fact that, unlike you, we can't be visibly turned off and lose erection often confuses men into hurrying things or missing major resources.

It isn't true that nudity, erotica, and so on don't excite us – probably the difference is that they aren't overriding things and that we don't separate them from emotions as easily as you do. Is it fair, I wonder, to give a simple instance? You, sir, can make orgasmically satisfactory love with a near stranger in half an hour flat. But please don't think for that reason that you can do the same for a woman who loves you personally if, at the end of the half-hour, you turn over and go straight to sleep. Granted this however, there are common reactions.

Granted this difference, however, there are common reactions. We seem to be less heavily programmed than you for specific turn-ons, but once we see one of these working on a man we care about, we soon program it into our own response, and can be less rigid and more experimental because of this ability.

Often, if we seem underactive, it's because we are wary of doing the wrong thing with that particular man, like touching up his penis when, in fact, he is trying not to ejaculate – tell us if you see us at a loss. The penis isn't a “weapon” for us so much as a shared possession – it's less the size than its personality, unpredictable movements, and moods that make up the turn-on. We like penetration because it makes us feel close to you – but don't feel put down if we don't then necessarily climax through it alone ([see her orgasm](#)); work with that rather than being discouraged by it.

Another important thing is the tough-tender mixture: obviously strength is a turn-on, but clumsiness (elbows in eyes, twisted fingers, for instance) is the dead opposite. You never get anywhere by clumsy brutality; however brutal good lovemaking sometimes looks, the turn-on is strength-skill-control, not large bruises, and the ability to be tender with it. Some people ask “tough or tender?” but the mood shifts so fast that you have got to be able to sense it. Surely it's possible – because some lovers do it – to read this balance from the feel of the woman.

No obsessive views about reciprocity – who comes on top and so on evens out during the passing of time: there can be long spells when we are happy to let you do the work, and others when we need to control everything ourselves and get an extra kick from seeing how we make you respond.

Women aren't “submissive” any more than men – if we have knuckled under in the past, it's only through social pressures. If we are dominant, we don't always act it out in bed by wearing spurs and cracking a whip. Men have a real advantage here in the constructive use of play (and can help women to act it out too). Since we all have some aggressions, good sex can be wildly forceful, but still never cruel.

As for sexual equality, nobody can possibly be a good lover without regarding their partner as a person and an equal. That is really all there is to be said on the matter.

Our sense of smell is the keener – don't oversaturate early on with masculine odors; just before orgasm is probably the time for full odor contact. Our own smell excites us as well as yours.

We learn, over a period of time, that the sort of hand- and mouth work that men like varies enormously. Some like it very rough, some hate it anything but extremely gentle, others in between. There is no way for us to tell except by asking and being told – therefore it's up to you to say what you like or you may get the opposite; remember that we love to know how to be good for you.

Some men are extraordinarily passive, or unimaginative, or inhibited, and – oddly – when they are any of these things, we don't become correspondingly forceful. We may long to do things and feel thoroughly frustrated, but we won't show it in most cases. So a woman's lovemaking will only be as good as her partner's and, more important, she will resent any man who is unexciting, not only because he is unexciting, but also because she will know she has been unexciting too.

Finally, you should never presume that what excites one woman sexually will work just as well on another woman. Women probably do differ sexually rather more than men, because of the greater complexity of our sexual apparatus (breasts, skin, and so on as well as pussy). Never assume that you don't need to relearn for each person. This is also true for a woman with a new man, but perhaps a little less so.

men (by him for her)



men (by him for her)

the most valued thing in lovemaking is “the divine gift of lechery”

We often wish that women’s sexuality was like ours, even though we know it isn’t. Our sexual response is far brisker and more automatic: it’s triggered easily by things, like putting a coin in a vending machine. Consequently, women and parts of women provide automatic sexual stimulus for us; your clothes, breasts, odor, and so on aren’t what we love instead of you – simply the things we need in order to set sex in motion and express love. You seem to find this hard to understand.

Secondly, most though not all male feeling is ultimately centered in the last inch of the penis (though you can, if you start intelligently, teach us female-type sensitivity all over the surface of our skin). And unlike yours, our sexuality depends on a positive performance – we have to be turned on to achieve an erection, and not turned off, in order to function; we can’t be passively “taken.” This matters intensely to men at both a biological and a personal level; sexual success is what makes us feel worthwhile. It explains why we are emphatically penis-centered and tend to open the proceedings with genital play, probably before you are ready and when you would much rather wait to get in the mood. Genital approach is how we get into the mood.

You need to understand these reactions, as we need to understand yours. A woman’s concern about being a sex object misses the point – sure, the woman and the various parts of her are sex objects, but most men ideally would wish to be treated piecemeal in the same way. Thus, the most valued thing, from you, in actual lovemaking, is intuition

of these object reactions, and direct initiative – starting the play, taking hold of the penis, giving genital kisses ahead of being asked; being an initiator, a user of your stimulatory equipment. This is hard to put in simple terms; it is what is meant by “the divine gift of lechery” – the art of sensing turn-ons and going along with them for the partner’s response. It isn’t the same for the two sexes because male turn-ons are concrete, while many female turn-ons are situational and atmospheric. Remember too that we may simply be tired of having to deliver, in life as well as in bed, and your taking over doesn’t just offer us the ultimate compliment, it also gives us the opportunity to relax and enjoy. Sex may be about the only place in our lives where we get to be held and nurtured.

Personal folklore apart, what the male turn-on equipment requires is the exact reverse of a virgin or a passively recipient instrument – not a demand situation, because that in itself can threaten a turnoff due to feelings of inadequacy, but a skill situation; I can turn you on, and turn myself on in doing so, and from that point we play it both ways and together. You can’t, of course, control your turn-ons any more than we can, but it helps if you have some male-type object reactions, like being excited by the sight of a penis, or hairy skin, or by the man stripping, or by physical kinds of play (just as it helps if we have some sense of atmosphere). It’s the active woman who understands our reactions, plays on them, and leads them out while keeping her own who is the ideal lover.

hormones

The fuel in the sex machine, keeping desire, arousal, and performance ticking over, as well as driving affection and love. For the most part, they form a constant underpinning of mood, supporting though never replacing the honest-to-goodness sexual diesel generated by enthusiastic lovers.

A peak or a valley, on the other hand, can impact. Sexually, the crucial fuel is testosterone, for her as well as for him. His will peak during his twenties, then settle into a more or less consistent pattern, dipping over the course of a long-term relationship and rising in a new one; no excuse for straying, but a possible explanation of the temptation to do so. With age, it will gently decline – but rarely enough to cause problems; if his erection is failing, that's reason for action, not resignation.

In her, testosterone has the same effect, raising desire, demand, and energy; in the last third of her menstrual month, when levels of the hormone are high, try more urgent, fighting sex. Around the menopause, as estrogen drops away and testosterone levels stay high, she may find to her delight a lust that lasts for months or years – a second adolescence of which she can take full advantage.

Oxytocin, the “cuddle hormone,” both bonds partners in affection and makes them less likely to want to be sexual – one reason why the postorgasmic default is to hug rather than go for a second bout. Add in prolactin, the “done that, time to rest” hormone also released at orgasm, to explain why, for him in particular, the default may well be to sleep. Prolactin is released when breast-feeding too, another reason why postpartum she may be utterly turned off all things sexual – just as the contraceptive pill, breast-feeding, and stress may imbalance her general hormone levels, with the same low-desire result. But never be held hostage – hormones may affect mood, but they can't overrule action; clear thinking, reassuring communication, and making love regardless are often enough to offset imbalances.

These notes are mainly included here for interest and understanding – all genuine lovers will want to know what's under the hood in order to make the car purr more sweetly – but largely there are no bedroom applications. If the machine falters, however, science is increasingly able to supply an answer; see your doctor.

preferences

More of us than we may think have a wide sexual range – that is to say, are able to respond sexually to either gender. Yes, many recognize who they are early in life and never shift. But adolescents often experiment before settling, and adults dream; same-sex relationships are in the top three sexual fantasies for heterosexuals, and some of the most surprising people – like Hans Christian Andersen – live out such dreams in real life. Preferences are not a choice that can be overridden in the long term; you may like both sexes, but if you don't, the irrelevant one simply doesn't smell right and there is no negotiating that.

If you occasionally wonder – as opposed to having strong and clear desires in a particular direction – you are probably not gay but curious. If you have strong, clear desires, don't agonize but talk it through; ringing a gay or lesbian help line won't mean you are persuaded or presupposed into it, but will mean you speak to someone who has asked themselves the same questions as you have and found appropriate answers. Your own answer, once found, could transform your sex life and also your life in general; passion can flow and activities that seemed off-putting with one gender can, with the other, feel natural and fulfilling. Surely it doesn't need saying that the joy of sex is rooted in knowing who you really are.

As to the whole political agenda, happily in most countries all of the above is not the “problem” it was when this book was first written, though in most cultures it's still a challenge and in others it's still actively against the law, either secular or religious. We, however, believe that one person's flavor of sexuality is no one else's business; everyone should be free to follow their inclinations without fear or favor. If you don't, you not only waste your own life pretending to be someone you aren't, you also potentially waste the life of a partner who knows there is something not quite right but can't pinpoint it. Whatever your preferences, be honest with yourself and your beloved, and never think you can “cure” a partner of their own preference by imposing yours upon them.

This book is written for the straight reader but, within the context of a loving relationship, behaviors borrowed from the whole range of possible preferences can have their uses. Don't dismiss (or judge) anything until you have tried it at least once.

confidence

It is, surely, a self-fulfilling prophecy that the more confident you are, the more you will enjoy sex. This is not about arrogance – the assumption that one is God’s gift will be an instant turnoff, particularly to women, if only because they know with that sort of mental map a man won’t have bothered to learn enough to be even moderately useful. At the other end of the extreme, a partner who starts off lacking in confidence only proves delightful if they ultimately benefit from care and feeding; lasting and insistent insecurity is draining in bed and out of it.

But true sexual confidence – being relaxed, knowledgeable about oneself, willing to learn about another, ready to ask for what’s needed, happy to take charge, and unwobbled by either failure or rejection – makes for that ultimate in sexual partners, one who is able both to give and receive with an equal abundance of pleasure.

This has nothing to do with looks. Nowadays, almost all women – and an increasing number of men – are scared of being spurned on that count, but this is because the media manipulates body image. If you don’t love your body, change your mind; if your partner doesn’t love your body, change your partner. Note to her: men are almost always more focused on sensation and the feelings of acceptance that sex gives than on your size, shape, or degree of firmness. If he has ever hugged you clothed, he already knows your shape; if when you are unclothed he has an erection, then he not only accepts but lusts after it. Note to him: women care hardly at all about shape, so relax please.

He, however, may have other insecurities. He is asked to demonstrate potency in much more obvious ways than she is, and the men’s magazines may have convinced him that unless he can do so he will be rejected. But in terms of pure erection, there are always other ways – and for most women those ways are just as acceptable, certainly on an occasional basis. If generally nervous, the answer is to end up in bed only with a partner one is relaxed with and then try things out. As with all human activities, the way to mastery is through play.

Whatever one’s size, experience, and ability – or disability – good sex is one of the most powerful confidence-builders because it places each partner right in the center of the other’s attention; beyond that, genuine compliments, demonstrated affection, and a total lack of comparison will complete the magic spell. She says: “Show me that you think I’m beautiful and everything else follows.” His words may be different, but the essential message will be the same.

cassolette



cassolette

her greatest sexual asset after her beauty

French for perfume box. The natural perfume of a clean woman: her greatest sexual asset after her beauty (some would say greater than that). It comes from the whole of her – hair, skin, breasts, armpits, genitals, and the clothing she has worn: it is her own signature scent and no two women are the same in this respect. Men have a natural perfume too, which women are aware of, but while a man can be infatuated with a woman's personal perfume, women on the whole simply tend to notice if a man smells right or wrong. Wrong means not so much unpleasant as intangibly not for them. Often their awareness of a man includes conditioned extras such as work odors or aftershave.

Because it's so important, she needs to guard her own personal perfume carefully and

learn to use it as part of her powers of attraction as skillfully as she uses the rest of her body. (We now know the science behind all this – pheromones, a kind of biological speed-bonding, making one attractive, relaxing a potential partner, creating mood. They say, “I’m interested ... I’m interesting.”) In particular, a woman’s personal perfume can be a long-range weapon (nothing seduces a man more reliably, and this can happen subliminally), but at the same time a skillful man can read it, if he is an olfactory type, and if he knows her, to determine when she is sexually excited.

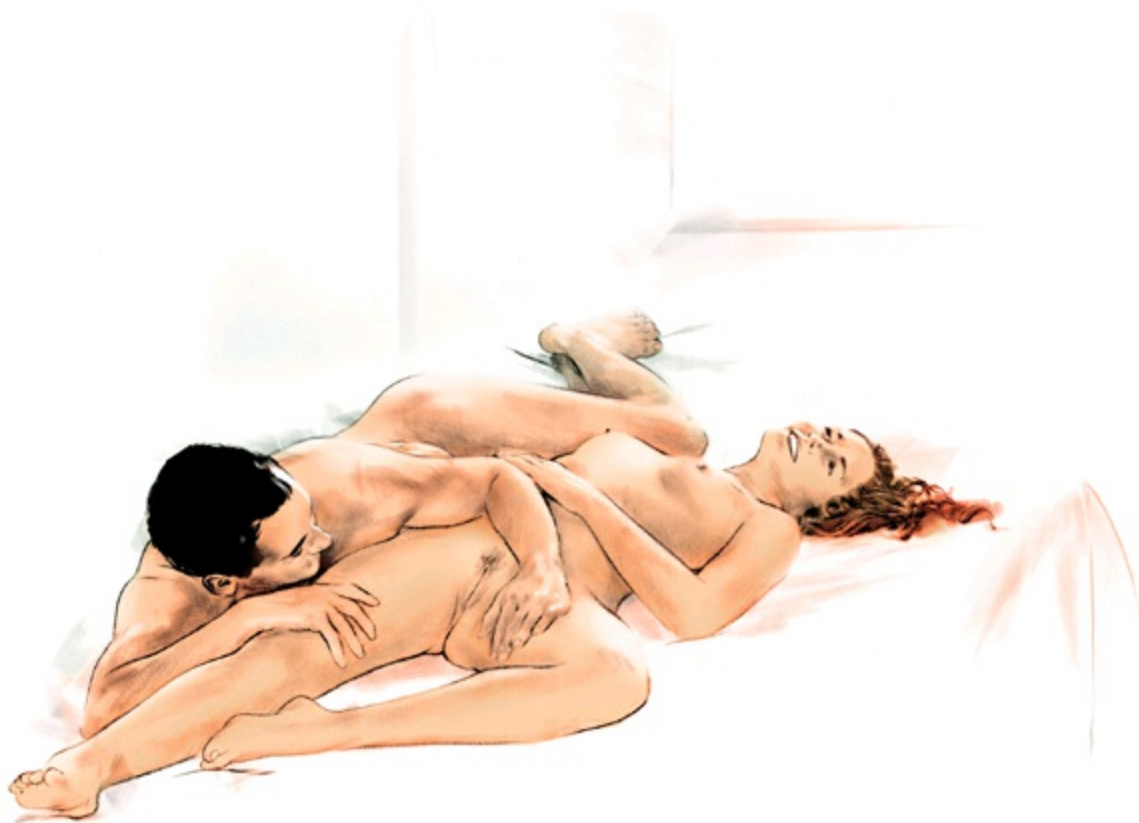
Susceptibility and consciousness of human clean perfumes vary in both sexes. Women have the keener sense of smell, but men respond to it more as an attractant. Whether these are inborn differences, like inability to smell asparagus, or whether they are due to unconscious blocking-out, we don’t know. Some children can’t understand the point of blind man’s buff because they know by smell who is touching them: some women can smell that they are pregnant. Men can’t smell some chemicals related to musk unless they have a shot of female sex hormone. Far more human loves and antipathies are based on smell than our deodorant-and-aftershave culture admits. Many people, especially women, say that when it’s a question of bed or not-bed, they let their noses lead them.

Which means it’s sad that, culturally, we are conditioned to deodorize and perfume. Better by far would be soap and water, although the unfortunates who sweat profusely may well have problems. A mouthful of aluminium chloride in an armpit is one of the biggest disappointments bed can afford, and a truly deodorized partner would be another. If smell (and taste) do become unpleasant, it’s probably a shift of diet or an infection; both can be cleared up, and should be done so in short order. There is no excuse for bad breath or the unilateral eating of garlic. Where lovemaking regularly happens at the end of a long, hot, or hard day, create a ritual of showering together beforehand. If you find each other’s perfume becoming distasteful long term, however, it may be a reflection of a more emotional distaste. Take it seriously.

Many women shave their armpit hair, conditioned as they are by the idea that hairlessness is sexy. Opinions are divided on this one – fashion dictates armpits should be bare, but hairs catch our pheromonal scent. This could be played as an argument for more body hair in general, but men’s facial hair doesn’t have the day-to-day importance of a woman’s little tufts. These are antennae and powder puffs to introduce herself in a room, or in lovemaking. They are there to brush the man’s lips with; he can do the same more circumspectly. Kissing deeply in the armpit leaves a partner’s perfume with you.

In the genital kiss, start with the lips covered, then brush the closed lips, then open her; when she gives the kiss to a man, she proceeds in the same order. It’s the fullest way to become aware of each other, even before you start to touch. She will feel much more at ease with this if he says clearly that he likes her scent and taste. Many women labor under the belief that their natural odor, particularly the pussy scent, is too strong. He can reverse this more or less instantly by showing enthusiasm.

vulva



vulva

can be stroked, sucked, squeezed, licked, softly stimulated with a vibrator

Her external parts, the equivalent of scrotum and penile skin for him, and beautifully immortalized in feminist artist Judy Chicago's exhibition *The Dinner Party*; thirty-nine vulval images symbolizing thirty-nine inspirational women. Can be stroked, sucked, squeezed, licked, softly stimulated with a vibrator – go up one side and down the other. Her perineum – between vagina and anus – is as sensitive as his; tease gently with a fingertip. The U-spot (see [trigger points](#)), between clitoris and vagina, can also be gently pressed in circular movements – use a careful knuckle or the tip of his penis; an unerect penis will give different sensations from an erect one. If she is sensitive post-climax, this will help her scale the peak again.

She may be insecure about the way she looks here – color, thickness, and size – but this is just one more reflection of the fact that most genital images we see have been doctored. New or growing lumps or bumps, however, like rashes or pain, need attention. The current fashion for “tidying” labia surgically is a mutilation; in cultures

less primitive than ours, women do the opposite, actively stretching their labia, then proudly folding them into origami shapes.

vagina

As magic as the penis, and to some males slightly scary: luckily, few anxieties survive closer acquaintance, but they are involved in certain male hang-ups. Prudes treat it as if it was radioactive – “All magic,” said a Papuan wizard, “radiates from it as fingers do from a hand” – and a lot of put-downs of women throughout history grew from this kind of Freudian undergrowth.

This is sad, for the vagina to her is as powerful yet vulnerable as the penis is to him, the source of reassuring menstrual blood, thudding orgasms, longed-for birth. Theoretically, only the first third of the vagina is truly sensitive; as a symbol of her openness and femininity, however, the whole of it is at the heart of her sexuality.

Normally slightly moist, or women would squeak when they walk, the vagina wets more or less copiously with sexual excitement; some women also ejaculate at orgasm, though that’s certainly not universal (see [trigger points](#)). Apart from this, any staining, discharge, rash, bleeding, or pain indicates infection and needs checking out; have regular Pap smears and a vaccination too, please, to protect against cervical cancer. The normal vaginal odor varies greatly between women and between times, but should always be pleasant and sexually exciting. For care and maintenance, don’t douche – it destroys not only healthy secretions but also the pheromones that attract him. A healthy vagina self-cleans.

Whether or not he has ever explored a woman’s pussy in detail, with fingers, eyes, and tongue, he should make sure he explores hers. She should learn to kiss with it – she has two mouths to his one.

clitoris

The first edition of this book commented that “the phallic-minded male is inclined to make a reassuring rush for the clitoris.” We now know that such a male would be absolutely correct; the clitoris and the phallus are in fact gender-adapted equals. Australian urologist Helen O’Connell’s research shows that the average clitoris – both what’s above the surface and the much bigger section buried in the pelvis – is quite as big as a flaccid penis, is made of exactly the same erectile tissue, has a penis-like shaft, and displays a tiny glans with its own foreskin. Smugly, it also has twice the number of nerve endings as its male counterpart.

Whether because of too little knowledge or too much distrust, society has never given the clitoris the same weight of symbolism as the penis. Those more aware, however, know that its role is to set light to the vagina as “pine shavings can be kindled to set a log of ... wood on fire” (Freud). Comedienne Carol Leifer put it more succinctly: “Making love to a woman is like buying real estate: location, location, location” (see [clitoral pleasure](#)). It is regrettable that some cultures feel the need to excise it – though Western cultures too, until very recently, used circumcision as a cure for “female problems.”

As to its role in climax, there is surely no point in joining the “pro” or “con” debate; everyone has the right to experience an orgasm in as many ways as they want to and are able to. But it should be added that while many women don’t ever orgasm easily through intercourse, few fail to orgasm through stimulation of the clitoris. It is, of course, the only human organ designed purely for pleasure.

mons pubis

The decorative fat pad situated over the female pubic bone that acts as a buffer in face-to-face intercourse, and which, more importantly, incorporates a layer of nerve endings that serve to transmit sensation to the rest of the area when it moves or is moved.

Many men are not aware, if they are oversold on direct clitoris stimulation, that most women can be brought to orgasm simply by holding this gently in the cupped hand and kneading or shaking it, before, without, or as well as putting a finger in the vagina (see [pubic hair](#)).

He can either grasp it (it exactly fits the palm) or rest the heel of his hand on it while using the fingers on the labia, or he can cup the whole area, mons and closed labia, in palm and fingers; he can then practice seeing how much sensation he can produce with her lying completely closed. In return, she can grasp his mons, circling his penis with her fingers, her other hand on his scrotum – though typically the effect is not the same; some men find that it simply tickles.

breasts



breasts

an orgasm from this position is “round,” and she feels it inside

“In our maturer years,” wrote Erasmus Darwin, “when an object of vision is presented to us which bears any similitude to the form of the female bosom ... we feel a general glow of delight, which seems to influence all our senses, and if the object be not too large we experience an attraction to embrace it with our lips as we did in early infancy the bosom of our mothers.”

Breasts are the natural second target, but often the first one we reach. Just how sensitive they are, in men as well as in women, varies enormously, and according to physical state and mood. As with other sexual organs, size is unimportant in relation to sensitivity; if it still creates insecurity, however, fascinated attention is a more effective cure than surgery. Some breasts don't answer at all, even in the emphatically non-frigid; some answer to extremely gentle touches, some to very rough handling (but they are

sensitive structures – don't let a need for forceful contact get the better of sound common sense).

Going round and round the nipple with the tongue tip or the glans, soft kneading with both hands, gentle biting, and sucking gently like a baby are the best gambits – she can do the same for him. (While there, both can occasionally check for suspicious lumps.)

If her breasts are big enough to meet, one can get a surprising degree of mutuality from intermammary intercourse. This is a good expedient on occasions when she doesn't feel like vaginal intercourse. She lies half flat on pillows, he kneels astride (big toe to her clitoris if she needs helping) with his foreskin, if he has one, fully retracted. Either he or she can hold the breasts together – wrap them around the shaft rather than rub the glans with them. It should protrude clear, just below her chin. Intercourse between the breasts is equally good in other positions – head to tail, or with her on top (especially if she has small breasts), or man sitting, woman kneeling; experiment accordingly. An orgasm from this position, if she gets one, is “round” like a full coital orgasm, and she feels it inside. Breast orgasms from licking and handling are “in between” in feel. His ejaculation this way gives her what's known as a “pearl necklace”; he should rub the semen well into her breasts when he has finished (*see [semen](#)*).

Breasts, vagina, and clitoris all at once make the fastest and most concentrated buildup of sensation once intercourse has begun, for some women at least. Many easily stimulated women can also experience a rather special pleasure from suckling a baby.

nipples



nipples

a direct hotline to her most sensitive parts

She says: “Unlike a man’s nipples, a woman’s can have a direct hotline to her clitoris and vagina. A man who can dial this correctly and will only take the time can do anything. Palm-brushing, eyelash-brushing, licking, and loud sucking like a baby can work wonders; the orgasms one gets from these are mind-blowing without detracting a jot from intercourse to come after. Please take time.” He, meanwhile, can get a very special jolt from this, made more intense still if she is actually lactating; male suckling is more of a majority interest than you might think.

On him, rather than by him, stimulation is less likely to have an effect; few men can get a nipple orgasm, but try a stiff pair of feathers (*see [feathers](#)*) or very gentle fingertip friction – men’s nipples easily get sore.

If the effect seems lacking, assiduous attention over time may help; try gentle circles with a toothbrush. There is no proof in the theory that caffeine creates temporary nipple sensitivity, but it’s still worth a try. Fluctuating hormones before her period can turn sensitivity into discomfort, and if there is itching, swelling, bleeding, or discharge, get it checked out. This applies to him as well as to her.

If a partner likes pain, or to test the possibility without putting the question direct,

pinch nipples lightly, then harder (never when sore, lactating, or newly pierced). The aim is a balance of pleasure and pain; after, once pressure is released, the whole body will be achingly sensitive for hours. If this appeals, move to nipple clamps (not clothes pegs, which aren't adjustable); a linked pair with one on each of his and her breasts also provides a neat accompaniment to any movements that create a gentle tug. When taken off, pinch with fingers, then release slowly to allow the blood to flow back in comfortably. Limit time on such play – 15 minutes is enough.

buttocks



buttocks

a turn-on in almost equal measure for both sexes

Next in line after breasts, buttocks alternate with them as visual sex stimuli for different cultures and individuals. Actually the original primate focus, being brightly colored in most apes; apparently equally fancied by the Neanderthals, who produced some of the best Stone Age figurines.

The buttocks are a major erogenous zone in both sexes, though less sensitive than breasts because they have fewer nerves and a layer of fat, and so need stronger stimulation (holding, kneading, slapping, or even harder beating – see [discipline](#)).

Intercourse from behind (see [rear entry](#)) is a pleasure in itself, but be careful if she has a weak back. In any position the muscular movements of coitus stimulate the buttocks in both sexes, particularly if each holds the partner's rear fairly tightly, one cheek in each hand. These extra sensations are well worth cultivating deliberately. Visually, good buttocks are a turn-on in almost equal measure for both sexes.

penis



penis

while the penis is emphatically his, it also belongs to both of them

Not only the essential piece of male equipment, even if it is often and expressively described as a “tool,” the penis has more symbolic importance than any other human organ, as a dominance signal and, by reason of having a will of its own, generally a “personality.” No point in reading all this symbolism back here, except to say that lovers will experience it, and find themselves treating the penis as something very like a third party. At one moment it’s a weapon or a threat, at another something they share, like a child. Without going into psychoanalysis or biology, it’s not a bad test of a love relationship if, while the penis is emphatically his, it also belongs to both of them. In any case, its texture, erectility, and so on are fascinating to both sexes, and its apparent autonomy, a little alarming.

Like the vagina, the penis collects anxieties and folklore, and is a focus for all sorts of magical manipulations. Male self-esteem and sense of identity tend to be located in it, as Samson’s energy was in his hair. If it won’t work, or worse, if she sends it up, or

down, the results will be disastrous. This explains the irrational male preoccupation with penile size. Size has absolutely nothing to do with physical serviceability in intercourse, or – since female orgasm doesn't depend on getting deeply into the pelvis – with capacity to satisfy a partner, though many women are turned on by the idea of a large one, and a few say that they feel more (*see* [size](#)). If anything, thickness matters more than length. Nor has flaccid size anything to do with erect size – a penis that is large when at rest simply enlarges less with erection. There is no way of artificially “enlarging” a penis.

Nor, except in very rare cases, is a penis too big for a woman – widthwise, the vagina will take a full-term baby. If his penis, whatever its length, knocks an ovary and hurts her, he shouldn't go in so far. A woman who says she is “too small” or “too tight” is usually making a statement about her arousal levels; she needs time, understanding, and foreplay. Shape also varies – the glans can be blunt or conical. This matters only in that the conical shape can make receptacle-tipped condoms uncomfortable through getting jammed in the tip.

Women who have really learned to enjoy sex are usually as fascinated by their lover's penis, size included, as men are by women's breasts, shape, odor, and feel, and learn to play with it fully and skillfully. Circumcised or not (*see* [foreskin](#)), it's a fascinating toy quite apart from its main use. There is a whole play scene connected with uncapping, stiffening, and handling it, making it pulsate or ejaculate, that is a major part of togetherness. This is equally important for the man – not only is it ego-boosting, but good hand- and mouth work practically guarantee a good sexual partner.

Care and maintenance: if he isn't circumcised, he will need to retract the foreskin fully for cleaning purposes, and if it won't retract beyond the corona all round the glans except at the front, get it seen to (correcting it involves a trifling operation with a blunt probe and doesn't necessarily mean that he needs circumcising). If it won't retract properly or is over-tight and gets stuck, get that attended to as well.

Slight asymmetry often develops with time – this does no harm unless it's pronounced or painful, in which case see a doctor. On the other hand, don't bend an erect penis or use a position in which it could get violently bent by accident. (This usually happens with the woman on top if she is careless near orgasm, or in putting him in, and he is just short of fully stiff – keep a little control here.) It is possible, though difficult, to fracture one of the two hydraulics contained in the shaft. This is very painful and can lead to pain or kinking on subsequent erection. The normal organ will stand up to extremely hard use, but not to these. (Avoid also silly tricks with suction and so on – *see* [inflators](#).)

Sores, discharge, lumps, bumps, bleeding, and so on signal illnesses and need treatment. Even if you both have proof that you are free of all sexually transmitted diseases – if you aren't, condoms are mandatory – don't have oral intercourse with someone who has a herpes on the mouth; you can get recurrent herpes of the penis or the vulva, which is a nuisance.

If the foreskin is dry from masturbation or long retraction, saliva is the recommended lubricant. Commercial equivalents are now sold that make things more comfortable and add sensation, but steer clear of the ones that claim to slow down or speed up response;

they can anesthetize or irritate him and, by association, her. If he has problems in this department, it's best to use less "quick-fix" methods (see [hair-trigger trouble](#), and [performance](#)).



penis
has more symbolic importance than any other human organ

size

Preoccupation with the size of their genitals is about as common in men (it is a “dominance signal,” like a deer’s antlers) as sensitivity about their breasts and figure is in women. That, however, is its only importance in matters sexual. The “average” penis is just over five inches overall when erect and between three and four inches round, but penises come in all sizes – larger ones may be spectacular, but no more effective except as visual stimuli. Smaller ones work equally well in most positions – and may, as only the first few inches of the vagina are sensitive, actually work better than larger examples. In any case, she will almost always report that what matters is how it’s used, not how big it is.

Non-erect size in the male is equally unimportant – some men before erection show no penile shaft at all, but extend to full size easily. The same applies to testicle weight – it varies, as does nose or mouth size, but has little to do with function. Small genitals are usually due to active muscles in the layer beneath the skin – a cold bath will shrink the best-endowed male down to Greek-statue proportions.

Accordingly, excessive preoccupation with size is an irrational anxiety, often created by the fact that men see their own penises as small because they are seen from above and other men’s penises as large because they are seen from the front. Don’t fall for the hype on lotions, potions, stretching exercises, or surgery – one can’t reliably and safely increase size, any more than one can increase stature. She should learn not to comment on it except favorably; he should learn not to give it a second thought. The few cases where male genitalia are really infantile occur in conjunction with major gland disturbances and are treatable but rare.

All the above reassurance also applies to vaginal size. Few women are too small; lubricate, add lots of foreplay, wait until she has “ballooned” through arousal before penetrating. So long as she isn’t hurting – in which case stop instantly – a tight woman gives the man extra-intense feelings. Nor is any vagina too large: if it seems a loose fit, switch to a posture in which her thighs are pressed together – from behind for best effect. Long term, do Kegel exercises (*see pompoir*) to keep muscles toned – though lots of sex works just as well and she will enjoy it more. Apart from postpartum stitching, surgery to tighten the vagina is usually a reflection of lack of confidence on her part or inappropriate demands on his.

Genital anatomy probably fixes which postures work best for a given couple, but no more than that. With rare exceptions, men and women are universally adapted. The only practical exception is in the case of a very big penis and a very small woman, in which case she should be careful on top, or she will knock an ovary (which feels very much like accidentally knocking a testicle does for a man), and he should avoid thrusting too hard until he knows he won’t hurt her. As to the size of other structures, such as breasts, these may be individual turn-ons, but every build has its sexual opportunities built in: use them.

foreskin

Cutting off this structure is possibly the oldest human sexual ritual. It still persists – for cultural as well as supposed health reasons. Some believe that cancer of the penis and cervix is rarer when it's done (a myth) or that it slows down orgasm (for which there is no evidence). It probably doesn't make very much difference, either to masturbation or to intercourse – one normally retracts it anyway for all these purposes – though if he doesn't have one, there is a whole range of covered-glans nuances he can't recapture. Holding the skin back hard with the hand (her hand) during intercourse works for both the circumcised and uncircumcised as an accelerator, and offers a sensation of its own.

Women who have experienced both are divided – as they are over which looks sexier. Some find the circumcised glans “neater” and are even turned off by an unretracted prepuce as looking “feminine,” while others love the sense of discovery that goes with retraction. If he is uncircumcised and she prefers the other, he can retract it – if vice versa, simply find other amusements. In terms of function, it's probably there for immunological protection and helpful for lubrication – the high density of nerve endings doesn't harm either.

While in the area, a word about the frenulum, the “little bridle” that connects the underside of the glans to the shaft. It is sensitive to stretching – it's probably this that creates the sensation during up-and-down hand work – and circumcision may tighten it or sometimes remove it altogether. If it's intact, try lubricated palm over glans, with thumb massaging frenulum and little finger directly on it circling smaller and smaller. Flick across with the tongue and apply sustained pressure while he simply relaxes. Reserve this technique, however, until he is ready to come more or less instantly.

In sum, the circumcised man isn't at any important disadvantage (or advantage), but many people prefer to be able to choose their egg with or without salt, and let their children do likewise.

scrotum

Basically, a sperm factory. The testes produce sperm; the scrotum is the control device to keep them producing it at the right temperature, moving up when he is cold and down when he is warm. No need to panic at asymmetry – it's normal for one testicle to be smaller and for the left one to hang slightly lower – though extraneous lumps or pain should be checked out immediately. It's also a highly sensitive skin area, and needs careful handling, since pressure on a testis is highly painful to its proprietor. Gentle tongue and finger work or cupping in the hand is about right, or try a fingertip along the visible center line and gentle teasing on the perineum between scrotum and anus. She can take it right into her mouth.

semen

There is no lovemaking without spilling this, on occasions at least. You can get it out of clothing or furnishings either with a stiff brush, when the stain has dried, or with a dedicated cleanser designed to remove blood. If you spill it over each other, massage it gently in. If you want a very copious ejaculate, he can masturbate nearly, but not quite, to orgasm about an hour beforehand to increase prostate secretion. If his semen tastes bad, try altering his diet, and if that makes no difference, get a checkup – it can indicate health problems. She may like to know that an average ejaculation delivers about five calories and a dose of vitamin C.

skin



skin

its coolness, texture, and tightness are triggers for a whole range of sexual feelings

This is our chief extragenital sexual organ – underrated by men, who concentrate on the penis and clitoris; better understood by women. She says: “The smell and feel of a man’s skin probably has more to do with sexual attraction (or the opposite) than any other single feature, even though you may not be conscious of it.”

Skin stimulation is a major component of all sex. Not only its feel when touched, but its coolness, texture, and tightness are triggers for a whole range of sexual feelings. Built in; the so-called erogenous zones are the ones most rich in nerve endings – lips, earlobes, feet, buttocks, breasts as well as genitals. Sensitivity will vary – for both according to mood and for her according to menstrual cycle. But it can be boosted in some people by emphasis, and by adding other textures, especially fur, rubber, leather, or tight clothing. Much underrated part of human sexual response, to be played to the full if it turns you on (see [friction rub](#), [pattes d’araignée](#), and [tongue bath](#) – use these to educate your own and your partner’s skin).

Lubrication

Most natural lubrication comes from her – the male equivalent kicks in only just before orgasm, which is far too late. The normal excited vagina is correctly set for friction; if she is too wet, dry gently with a handkerchief-wrapped finger (not tissues – you will never stop finding the bits). But don't try to de-lubricate with lotions or potions; they can lacerate the vagina.

If she is too dry – it's normal for many women – it's likely because she is not sufficiently aroused; simply take the time and put in the effort. More lasting dryness can be due to stress, infections, medication, depression, hormonal ups and downs, and some medical conditions; see a doctor.

If more lubrication is needed, saliva is the best natural one. There is also much to be said for the many commercial possibilities offering added sensation, smells, and tastes, though note that oil-based ones destroy latex condoms, silicone-based ones destroy silicone sex toys, and some anesthetize. Be particularly sure to use lubricant if he is penetrating anywhere that doesn't naturally oblige – breasts, armpit, anus.

earlobes



earlobes

can trigger full climax from manipulation alone

Underrated erogenous zone, together with the adjacent neck skin – the small area behind the ear has an arousal hotline via the vagus nerve – and the nape of the neck. As with all extragenital sites, they are more responsive in women than men, whose skin is literally as well as metaphorically thicker. Once made sensitive (gentle fingering, sucking, and so on during build-up and before orgasm, to condition the response), earlobes can trigger full climax from manipulation alone. Be warned that some women

find the noise of heavy breathing excruciating and a definite turnoff, so be careful ([see blowing](#)).

Heavy earrings help, and can actually maintain subliminal erotic excitement, especially if they are long enough to brush the neck when she turns her head – this is, in fact, the original function of the large Eastern and Spanish candelabra-type earrings.

Swinging weights as erotic stimuli to condition a particular area aren't confined to the ears. Safe installation and skillful handling of other types of body jewelry can provide additional erotic pleasure.

navel



navel

merits careful attention when you kiss or touch

Fascinating to lovers, like all the details of the human body. It's not only decorative but has a lot of cultivable sexual sensation; it fits the finger, tongue, glans, or big toe, and merits careful attention when you kiss or touch. Intercourse in the navel is practicable (there are stories of naive couples who thought that was the usual way, and it's a common childhood fantasy about how sex is conducted). If she is plump, she can hold up the skin on each side to make labia. In any case, the finger or tongue tip slips into it naturally in both sexes.

armpit



armpit

classical site for kisses

Classical site for kisses and can be used instead of the palm to silence your partner at climax – if you do use your palm, rub it over your own and your partner’s armpit area first. Also a key site for pheromones, which cling, following perspiration, to underarm hair and generate arousal (see [cassolette](#)). Which is why the original version of this book instructed that underarm hair should “on no account be shaved” – nowadays, depilation is more or less universal for her and not unknown for him; tastes change.

Axillary intercourse is an occasional variation. Handle it as for intermammary intercourse (see [breasts](#)), but with his penis under her right arm – well under, so that friction is on the shaft, not the glans, as in any other unlubricated area. Her left arm goes around his neck and he holds her right hand behind her with his right hand. She will get her sensations from the pressure against her breasts, helped by his big toe pressed to her clitoris if she wants it (see [big toe](#)). Not an outstandingly rewarding trick, but worth trying if you like the idea.

feet

Very attractive sexually to some people – he is able to get an orgasm, if he wishes, between the soles of her feet. Their erotic sensitivity varies a lot. Sometimes, when they are the only part you can reach, they serve as channels of communication, and the big toe makes a good penis substitute (*see* [big toe](#)). Tickling the soles excites some people out of their minds; for others it's agony, but increases general arousal. You can try it as a stimulus or, briefly, for testing the effectiveness of bondage (*see* [ligottage](#), and [rope work](#)). Firm pressure on the sole at the instep, however administered, is erogenous to most people. But so can almost any touch be in a woman who is that way minded – one can get a full orgasm from a foot, a finger, or an earlobe. Men respond far less but equally easily if the handling is skillful.

big toe



big toe

a magnificent erotic instrument

The pad of the male big toe applied to the clitoris or the vulva generally is a magnificent erotic instrument. The famous gentleman in erotic prints who is keeping six women successfully occupied is using tongue, penis, both hands, and both big toes. The toe can be used in mammary or armpit intercourse or any time he is astride her, or sits facing as she lies or sits. Make sure the nail isn't sharp. In a restaurant, one can surreptitiously remove a shoe and sock, reach out, and keep her in almost continuous orgasm with all four hands fully in view on the table top and no sign of contact – a party trick that rates as really advanced sex, though she may appear more than a little distracted. She has less scope, but can learn to masturbate him with his penis held between her two big toes. The toes reputedly have a direct nerve link to the genitals, and can be kissed, sucked, tickled, or tied with stimulating results.

hair



hair

handle it, touch each other with it

Head hair has a lot of Freudian overtones: in ancient mythology it's a sign of virility – witness Samson or Hercules – and some of these sexual associations have persisted to the present. Our culture, having learned in the past to associate long hair with women and short hair with manly conformity, has been occasionally excited to frenzy when young males rejected the stereotype and wore their hair long. Freud thought long female hair acted as reassurance to the male by being a substitute for the phallus that women don't

have. Be that as it may, long male hair today tends to go with a less anxious idea of maleness.

Sex play with long hair is great because of its texture – you can handle it, touch each other with it, and generally use it as one more resource. Unless part of mutual mock fights, tugging and pulling is a total turnoff and will break you out of your sex trance. Long hair or a plait can be rolled to make a vagina substitute, or the penis lassoed with a loop of it, though some may object because it's a bore to wash.

Some women are turned on by a fair amount of masculine body hair because it looks virile, others are turned off by it because it looks animal – this seems to be a matter of attitude.

Male facial hair is another focus of convention – sometimes everyone has it as a social necessity or a response to convention, at other times it is persecuted, or confined to sailors, pioneers, and creative people such as artists and chefs. Nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer disapproved on the grounds that it was immodest to wear a sex signal in the middle of one's face. Today you can please yourself, or better, your partner.

pubic hair



Shave it off if you prefer: some people do. If you do shave it once, you are, however, committed to a prickly interregnum while it regrows. Some nowadays prefer it off in the interest of fashion or total nudity, or prefer the hardness of the bare pubis.

Others find it decorative and regard it as a resource. Try brushing it lightly and learn to caress with it – it can be combed, twirled, kissed, held, even pulled. In the woman it can move the whole pubis, skillfully handled, to the point of orgasm.

As a halfway house, she can trim it creatively, confining the triangle to the middle of the pubis with a bare strip each side – Brazilian style – removing hair that comes outside a G-string or a swimsuit, or trimming enough to make the vulva fully visible.

One myth that has proved remarkably persistent is that you can tell whether a blonde is natural from the color of her pubic hair. In reality, it's often several shades darker than head hair – consequently, in black-haired women it can be nearly blue.

Men can shave if they like, or if their partners like, but it's difficult to shave the scrotum. He may need to shave the penile shaft and root to use condoms – otherwise the hairs can get caught. This can produce sharp pain at a time when he should be experiencing intense pleasure.

health

We wish society would respect the link between this and sexuality. To us it's self-evident – despite all the cultural, religious, or simply anxiety-based hang-ups people have about keeping sex in its rightful place, whatever that is – that good health is supported by a good love life. Everyone, ill or well, deserves sex if they want it. To presuppose that illness or disability removes that wanting is to categorize sex in purely physical terms, to deny that it's there for affection, support, love – and moreover, to ignore the fact that it's a fundamental human need.

Yes, bad health can all too easily undermine sexual desire – even a heavy dose of the common cold can push sex right to the bottom of the list. One should never pressure oneself, or pressure one's partner, if suffering from illness. Longer term, it's not only pain or lack of function that hinders but also vulnerability and low self-esteem, particularly if illness directly affects sexual parts. You may feel so needy and dependent that sex seems a burden; you may feel so furious at your own ill health (or your partner's good health) that intimacy seems inappropriate. What you don't need is those around you adding to your problem by assuming you have lost – or never had – desire. To be human is to be at least potentially sexual, but there are some clinicians who suppose the young ill don't need sex education and the adult ill never need sex.

Both suppositions are wrong. Loving sex is everyone's right – alone if they have no partner. Anyone who can think about sex can experience desire. Anyone who can feel anything in mouth, breasts, clitoris, penis – or can fantasize about feeling – has at least potential for arousal. Anyone who can move fingers, tongue, or toes – or relate their fantasy – can arouse their partner. If none of that is possible or simply not wanted, then hugs, kisses, and hand-holding will give a sense of connection that can often do much to offset the absence of sex.

Knowledge is power, so get as much information as you can about what's possible for you (or for your partner if it's they who are ill) – *see* [resources](#). What feels good may not be what felt good before illness struck. Don't panic if your condition has affected genitals – brains can fill in the missing sensations; it's reckoned that over half of women with spinal-cord injury can orgasm with hand or mouth work.

Be practical and proactive here – joining a self-help group for the relevant disease or disability will give encouragement and support – and work with what you have, not what you don't have. If tiredness is an issue, make love just after waking; if pain or stiffness is an issue, take painkillers and a hot bath half an hour beforehand. Choose positions that take weight off vulnerable body parts – she can be taken from behind if she can't bear his weight and he can have her on top if he can't thrust. If erection is difficult, don't assume that's the way things have to be until you have explored the “little blue pill” possibility. And in any case, don't assume that intercourse is the gold standard – if hand, mouth, and a vibrator do the job, so be it. If desire is low or orgasm is challenging, check medications; some act to undermine sexual response but can be changed, given the right conversation with your doctor.

If hospitalized or institutionalized, you should ask for – if necessary, demand – privacy. If you are alone or both partners have limited mobility, some care workers are willing to assist, unbuttoning clothing, positioning limbs, and cleaning up afterwards, though it will need careful negotiation.

If you are hesitating to even mention the issue to health professionals, remember that they will have heard the “Can I have sex?” question many times before. If you don’t trust your health professional – or he or she is erotophobic (some are) – then they can’t help you, and you ought to change professionals. If the doctor actively prescribes no sex, challenge that opinion. If the answer really is no, only accept it if you are sure the doctor knows how much passion means to you; a good clinician will realize that stopping sex for any length of time is undermining. It bears repeating; for most people, good health is sustained by, and bad health improved by, a loving and regular sex life.

age

The only thing age has to do with sexual performance is that the longer you live, the more you learn. Young people (and some older ones) are firmly convinced that no one over fifty makes love, and it would be pretty obscene if they did. Ours isn't the first generation to know otherwise, but probably the first one that hasn't been brainwashed into being ashamed to admit it. No one need lose either sexual needs or sexual function with age; on the contrary, the best may be yet to come.

For women, the end of ovulation means the end of fertility, and for some this subtly affects their self-esteem. For others it represents a total liberation from contraceptive worry, and this, in addition to more sexual knowledge and a flurry of hormonal changes, can find her at a certain age slightly taken aback at her own high level of lust; remember too that a woman's ability to climax rises over the years.

As to menopausal symptoms, there is much debate right now about HRT (hormone replacement therapy); the jury is out and the best advice is to make an informed decision following regular talks with a clinician. If the evidence is against, there are medical or natural health solutions for the short-term problems of night sweats, hot flashes, and vaginal dryness, and the long-term risks of heart problems and bone-density reduction. Sex – with a partner or alone – will always help.

Men, who don't have as dramatic a physical change, may still both suffer disease and undergo an emotional "male menopause," which coincides with realizing that they haven't done what they fantasized about in youth, and that they had better do it now. This can lead to injudicious thrashing about, or simply a reassessment of their aims and opportunities very like a second adolescence. Women are increasingly hitting this too – the empty nest for both can be an intimation of mortality that in itself kick-starts a bout of midlife wet dreams.

Physically, the important changes for men over the first seven decades are that spontaneous erection occurs less often (a complete lack of erection is likely to be caused by ill health and should trigger an immediate doctor's visit); ejaculation takes longer to happen, which can be an advantage; and coital frequency tends to fall. It's a good idea not to try for ejaculation every time, which will give more mileage and no less mutual pleasure. But given a supportive and receptive partner, decent general health, and an absence of the belief that one ought to run out of steam, active sex lasts as long as life.

If activity is low and you are both happy with that, fine; sex is not compulsory. But about half of all couples over the age of sixty-five make love on a regular basis – a higher percentage, incidentally, than when the first edition of this book appeared more than 35 years ago – and many of the others will have stopped because of physical or relationship fragility, not sexual problems per se. The things that stop you from having sex with age are exactly the same as those that stop you from riding a bicycle (bad health, thinking it looks silly, no bicycle). The difference is that these things happen later for sex than for bicycles. So don't buy into the myth of age-limited performance – in any case, it's often culturally based; 90 percent of French women of a certain age

think sex is important, as compared with only 30 percent of their British counterparts. *Vive la France!*

The most important thing is never to drop sex for any long period – if you do, you may have trouble restarting. Keep yourself going solo if you don't, for the time being, have a partner. What helps at this point: having sex in the morning when his testosterone levels are highest; making sure to keep a tube of lubricant handy for her vaginal dryness; her taking the lead and helping out with hand and mouth; him realizing that his hand and mouth may be just as acceptable as his penis; an easy ability on both sides to be experimental and broaden the repertoire.

Two warnings. Don't stop using contraception until she has been period-free for two years (if under fifty) or one year (over fifty). Moreover, don't stop using protection if there is any doubt at all about sexual history – a sixty-year-old partner is actually more of a threat than a twenty-year-old because they are likely to have had a lot more experience (see [safe sex](#), and [birth control](#)).

But those warnings aside, the older you are, the more potential you have for true intimacy – the sort that's not just based on hormonal surges but on a capacity to let go of your own insecurities and so deeply desire the other person. More confident, more knowledgeable, more experienced, you know what goes where and what to do with it; you know what works for you; you know what works for each other or – if you are newly come together – you know how to find out. Age brings patience and kindness, and an increased ability to both give and take; sex becomes more important, not less, as time goes on. As with so many things, later life is the time when you have tried everything and settle down to the things you like most – together. Some of the most spectacular and joyful sex imaginable is happening, right now, between people who would count themselves part of the “older generation.”

sex maps

We are all born sexual beings; fetuses have erections, and from the age of a few months infants touch their genitals. We don't, however, grow up to become the same sexual beings: John Money's term "love map" – a mind template of the perfect lover – could be renamed "sex map," and everyone's sex map is different. Through early messages, through emotional events, through partner experiences, and through our culture's rites of passage, we all end up with a unique idea of what a sexual partner should do and what the sex act should involve. We all know, instinctively, what compels us and what repels us. We all know what our fetishes are.

On one level this matters not a bit. An individual sex map doesn't – or shouldn't – influence one's own self-value or a partner's opinion; it's unimportant whether one can swing from the chandeliers or not, whether one has had a queue of sexual partners or is a virgin.

On another level it matters enormously because sex maps underpin what we do and how we respond. They can get distorted; we may end up believing that all men get instantly hard on demand when they don't; that good sex just happens spontaneously when it doesn't. Plus, sex maps are often out of our awareness – we can fail to realize that we have unrealistic or unhelpful expectations, and so be doomed to disappointment. "Sex," as actor Shirley MacLaine once said, "is hardly ever just about sex."

The answer to all this is knowledge. It's never too late in life to find out just what sex is about for you. It's also never too early in a relationship to get to know a partner's expectations. Exploring each other's sex maps is highly advisable for any erotic liaison and an absolute necessity for anything that's going to last beyond the first night. Likes, dislikes, hates, fears, prejudices, and dreams: don't presume that a partner will know yours unless you tell them; don't presume you know theirs unless they have told you. Unpick them all, together, without feeling threatened, to appreciate as well as to understand – your own, revealed in comparison, as well as theirs.

Knowledge, it should be added, is important in other ways – it informs, improves, and optimizes the maps of young people growing up. We now know, through competent research, that sex education actively raises the age at which adolescents first have sex and lowers the number of partners they have and the number of risks they take; there is no excuse for withholding from children knowledge not only of the mechanics but also the underlying and informing emotions. To quote the first edition of this book: "Good sex education starts with respecting your children's modesty, answering their questions, and letting them see that you regard this as a topic for pleasurable interest, naturalness – and privacy, not secrecy."

fidelity



fidelity

people have to find their own fidelities

Fidelity, infidelity, jealousy, and so on. We have deliberately not gone into the ethics of lifestyle. The facts are that few of us go through life with sexual experience confined to one partner only, infidelity figures increase year after year, and many people run multiple relationships on parallel tracks. See the five-to-seven early evening infidelity slot or the rich man's love nest. Yet most of us still remain monogamous in our long-term relationships, at least unless things start to go sour.

Don't buy into the myth that men do the betraying and women are immune – the female is just as programmed to stray, and if her statistics are lower, it's due to lack of opportunity, not instinct. (Besides, surveys usually measure lustful activity, whereas women's temptation is to fall in love, though the results can be even more devastating – think of *Anna Karenina*.)

There are as many reasons for infidelity as there are people, but in general for her it's a switching of loyalty when a central relationship disappoints; for him it's a boost to self-esteem when a central relationship invalidates. All this can be vice versa. Not to advocate, but this may be because humans have three sets of needs – for sex, romance, and deep attachment – and aren't always able to meet them all, long term, with one partner.

Whatever the temptations, however, fidelity is not only a good ideal but a good idea. We are more able to love – and to make love – if we are neither lying nor being lied to. Active deception always hurts a relationship. Complete frankness that is aimed to avoid guilt, or as an act of aggression against a partner, can do the same. The real problem arises from the fact that sexual relations can be anything, for different people and on different occasions, from a game to a total fusion of identities; the heartaches arise when each partner sees it differently.

There is no easy answer here. There is no sexual relationship that doesn't involve responsibility, because there are two or more people involved: anything that, as it were, militantly excludes a partner is hurtful, yet to be whole people we have at some point to avoid total fusion with each other – “I am I and you are you, and neither of us is on Earth to live up to the other's expectations.” People who communicate sexually have to find their own fidelities. All we can suggest is that you discuss them, so that at least you know where each of you stands.

A final word on jealousy. Never play “get-even” games by flirting and worse. It may bring an errant partner to heel short term, but long term it's the worst kind of unloving behavior – and pointless; a relationship that doesn't hold together without such manipulations is not worth having. If you are prone to jealousy, particularly the desperately insecure, low-self-esteem kind, get counseling. If your partner is prone to betrayal, get out.

compatibility

Not whether you are “in love” or have chemistry, but whether – when you settle in for the long haul – the jigsaw puzzle pieces fit. If they do, then no external force will shake you; if they don’t, however good you feel there will always be a sense of something missing. This is about having the same values, aims, goals – one reason why arranged (not forced) marriages often work better than the hearts-and-flowers variety. Two people see the world the same way, and that leaves them not so much focused on each other as, in French novelist and aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s words, “looking together in the same direction” – as neat a definition of lasting love as one could hope to find.

Sexually, looking in the same direction is initially about complementary sexual preferences; if she fancies him and he also fancies her, then forget it, at least in bed. It’s also about how important sex is; what’s acceptable (erotica, infidelity, fetishes, and so on); how much and how often. Similarity not quantity matters here – they can both be happy with it once a year and hence be happy with each other. Get the match on these right and the connection will be bone deep.

Sexual incompatibilities that surface once the first rush of love is over are mostly due to loss of love, not lust. But keep the sexual fit and it will be much harder to fall out of love; this may seem like kindergarten stuff, but in and of itself, passion will act as a safeguard for the whole relationship. Properly done, sex is not only based on compatibility; it also creates it.

desire





desire

desire will be strongest where lovemaking is most effective

What prompts desire at first is insecurity. We are unsure of the other's response, unsure of the ending to the story; the possibility that we might not get what we want creates a kind of obsessive focus. Thus medieval "courtly love," thus psychologist Dorothy Tennov's "limerence," thus *Romeo and Juliet* and most of the lyrics of contemporary music. When and if consummation comes, we are left with an air of astonished gratitude.

For desire to grow, what's needed after that is mutual appreciation. One doesn't necessarily need commitment – society is now past the point where a woman only allowed herself to lust once she had the ring on her finger – but believing that the person we desire is still going to desire us in the morning lowers our emotional barriers

and lets us get serious about the business of wanting. What then develops is everything this book is about.

If desire fails early on, it's probably because sometimes once we have what we want, we don't want it anymore, and the most sensible thing for both parties at that point is to let the whole thing go. Once love is established, however, a temporary dip shouldn't be cause for panic, withdrawal, or infidelity; no one, male or female, can enjoy sex when one is dead with fatigue, when one has just given birth, when children are hammering on the door, or in the middle of a busy street. If desire fails totally and permanently, the likely culprits are medical or hormonal problems, depression, or relationship crisis – and it's not disloyal but sensible to rush off to the doctor or the relationships counselor (see [resources](#)). Ignoring the problem and teeth-gritting – following Alice, Lady Hillingdon's advice to “lie back and think of England” – will simply make the problem worse as the lack of pleasure gradually seeps into your blood. Eventually, all that will be left is negative reaction; a partner's touch becomes something to shrink from. Get help now.

Other than these situations, a strong and lasting desire for each other is a reasonable request to make of the love gods, but serious players know that the gods help those who help themselves. Desire will be strongest where lovemaking is most effective; that means both partners should know how to arouse creatively and bring the other to climax as a matter of course, however much teach-and-learn it took to get there. In the end, Pavlov's dogs stopped salivating when no food appeared; it's wise to make sure that most meals satisfy both diners at least most of the time.

Intense desire is not just about passion, however, but also about emotion – one reason why the title of this book contains words referring to both. If we are to keep lusting, we need to keep feeling; if resentment and irritation lead to emotional anesthetization, that will inevitably lead to physiological anesthetization and a total shutdown of sensation experience. This is not to say that feelings have to be positive all the time – even the best of relationships contain some of what sex therapist David Schnarch describes as “reptilian” reactions; that is, going in for the kill. But to keep on feeling passion, you need to have the courage to keep feeling full stop. Rage if you have to, but don't disengage.

Remember that desire will be strongest in situations where it's awarded the most space and encouragement; if you want each other, act on it. A truly dedicated lover works at their art, and realizes that art is no less valuable for having to be worked at. The more sex one has, the more one will want – even with his biological limiter, that is true for him, and it's even more true for her.

love

We use the same word for man-woman, mother-child, child-parent, and other interpersonal relations – rightly, because they are a continuous spectrum. In talking about sexual relations, it seems right to apply it to any relationship in which there is mutual tenderness, respect, and consideration – from a total interdependence where the death of one partner maims the other for years, to an agreeable night together. The intergrades are all love, all worthy, all part of human experience.

Some meet the needs of one person, some of another – or of the same person at different times. That’s really the big problem of sexual ethics, and it’s basically a problem of self-understanding, and of communication. You can’t assume that your “conditions of love” are applicable to, or accepted by, any other party; you can’t assume that these won’t be changed quite unpredictably in both of you by the experience of loving; you can’t necessarily know your own mind.

If you are going to love, these are risks you have to take, and don’t depend simply on whether or not you have sex together – though that is such a potentially overwhelming experience that tradition is right in pinpointing it. Sometimes two people know each other very well, or think they have worked things out through discussion, and they may be right. But even so, if it’s dignifiable by the name of love, it’s potentially an open-ended experience. Tradition has tried to cut the casualties by laying down all kinds of schedules of morality, but these never work 100 percent in practice. Nor are they of much use in classifying the merits of different kinds of relationships (*see* [fidelity](#)).

If sexual love can be – and it is – the supreme human experience, it must be also a bit hazardous. It can give us our best and our worst moments. In this respect it’s like mountain climbing – over-timid people miss the whole experience; reasonably balanced and hardy people accept the risks for the rewards, but realize that there’s a difference between this and being foolhardy. Love, moreover, involves someone else’s neck besides your own. At least you can make as sure as may be that you don’t exploit or injure someone – you don’t take a novice climbing and abandon them halfway up when things get difficult. Getting them to sign a consent form before they start isn’t an answer either. There was a great deal to be said for the Victorian idea of not being a cad (“person devoid of finer or gentlemanly feelings”). A cad can be of either sex.

When this book was first written, the world was in the middle of the most radical rethinking of sexuality ever – and the subsequent rethinking of love. The prediction then was that sex and love could be divorced, and no-strings sex is certainly now more common. But most of us still require a connection before we can do any more than simply perform; love may not be all you need, but it’s an essential for any except the most basic satisfaction. Equally, when the going gets rough in relationships, good, pleasurable sex can bring you through. When you make love, you do exactly that.

appetizers



real sex



real sex

being together, touching, holding hands

The sort our culture and most mass-media propaganda don't recognize: not that intercourse, or masturbation, or genital kisses aren't real sex, but some other things are real sex too, which people need, but that don't excite our time and age. We can list some: being together in a situation of pleasure, or of danger, or just of rest; touching, even if that doesn't involve any of the traditionally erotic zones; old-fashioned expedients like holding hands (permissiveness makes for more orgasms, but we miss out on the simple pleasures of looking, smiling, flirting, dating, kisses, and holding each other close – the bonding elements that vagina-obsessed males think of as schmaltz); sleeping together even without, or especially after, intercourse.

Most women know all this, but they are as shy about telling it to males, for fear of seeming over-sentimental, as males are about confiding object preferences or forceful needs. Don't get stuck with the view that only those things that Auntie calls sexual are sexual. In a book on sexual elaboration, this needs saying, if you are concerned with love rather than an Olympic pentathlon. People in our culture who are hung up on the Olympic bit don't get much from using the gentler options, unless over time such use builds the realization of just how important those options really are.

food



food

a meal can be an entire erotic experience in itself

Dinner is a traditional preface to sex. In old-time France or Austria, one booked a restaurant room with no handle on the outside of the door. At the same time, there is a French saying that love and digestion went to bed together and the offspring was apoplexy. This isn't quite true. On the other hand, immediately after a heavy meal is not an ideal moment for sex – you can easily make your partner, especially the woman if she is underneath, sick.

A meal can be an entire erotic experience in itself – for a demonstration of how a woman can excite a man by eating a chicken leg or a pear “at” him, cannibal-style, see the lovely burlesque in the 1963 film *Tom Jones* or the outrageously sensuous equivalents in *Tampopo* and *9½ Weeks*.

A meal à deux is, quite certainly, a direct lead-in to love play (see [big toe](#), and [remote control](#)), but don't overindulge on alcohol. Recent studies show it lowers inhibitions and increases euphoria, particularly for women, but is the most common cause of unexpected erectile problems. If you are serious about sex, develop a liking for mineral water.

Love and food mixed well in Greek and Roman times when you reclined together on a

couch, or fed one another (geishas do this still). Some people enjoy food-and-sex games (ice cream on the skin, grapes in the pussy, and so on), which are great for regressive orality, but messy for an ordinary domestic setting; take care too with sugary foods, which can cause yeast infections, and oily foods, which can shred condoms. Most lovers with privacy like to eat naked together and take it from there.

dancing



dancing

good lovers dance well together

All dancing in pairs looks towards intercourse. In this respect the Puritans were absolutely right. The development of no-contact dances has come about because one doesn't now need a social excuse to embrace, but as an excitant it need not involve contact at all – in fact, most dancing today is far more erotic than a clinch because you aren't too close to see one another. At its best, this sort of dance is simply intercourse by remote control (see [remote control](#)).

Most good lovers dance well together. You can do it publicly or in private, clothed or naked. Stripping one another while dancing is a sensation on its own. Don't hurry to full intercourse – dance until his erection is unbearable and she is almost coming, brought there by rhythm and the sight and perfume of each other alone. Even then you need not stop.

Most couples can insert and continue dancing, either in each other's arms or limbo-style, linked only by the penis, provided they are the appropriate heights. Unfortunately, this means that the woman needs to be at least as tall as the man, while as a rule she is going to be shorter. Otherwise, he has to bend his knees, which is tiring. If you can't dance inserted, and if she is small, pick her up into one of the Hindu standing positions, legs around waist, arms around neck, and continue in this way. If she is too heavy to pick up, you can turn her and take her stooping from behind, still keeping the dance going.

Seduction, or encouragement, while dancing is a natural. In the days of formal dancing, one wished that the woman had her breasts on her back, where one could reach them, but that would have made it too easy. Gentle pressure, rhythm, sight and scent, and a knowledge of remote-control methods are all that's needed to bring the dance on to its erotic conclusion.

femoral intercourse

Another dodge, like [clothed intercourse](#), to preserve virginity, avoid pregnancy, and so on, used in past cultures that cared about virginity and had no contraceptives, or in present cultures that advise abstinence before marriage. Comes for us under the heading of substitutes.

Used from before or behind, or in any other posture where she can press her thighs together. The penis goes between them, with the shaft between her labia but the glans well clear of the vagina, and she presses hard. Gives the woman a special set of sensations – sometimes keener than on penetration, so worth trying. Given condoms and other forms of birth control, and safe sex, one need not be so rigid about technique as were our forefathers,

clothed intercourse



clothed intercourse

all the movements of straight intercourse

Not reliable as a contraceptive or protective unless the ejaculation position is fully interfemoral; that is, with the glans well clear of the vulva, cloth or no cloth. Some people like this either as a starter or during menstrual periods. Inclined to be “dry” and make the man sore if it goes on too long or involves starched material of the sort denim jeans are made – go gently. Many women can get a fair orgasm from it.

safe sex

We are, thankfully, past the point where HIV is an automatic death sentence. However, in some parts of the world it still is a death sentence, and worldwide, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are at an all-time high. This is no time to be careless.

The threats are many. Gonorrhea and syphilis are still with us, and the former is getting harder to eradicate because of resistant strains. Plus herpes, trichomoniasis, bacterial vaginosis, thrush, viral hepatitis, crabs, scabies, HIV of course, the human papilloma (wart) virus, and chlamydia. We now know that the wart virus triggers a majority of cases of cervical cancer, while chlamydia can cause infertility ([see resources](#)). For all these reasons, here are the guidelines.

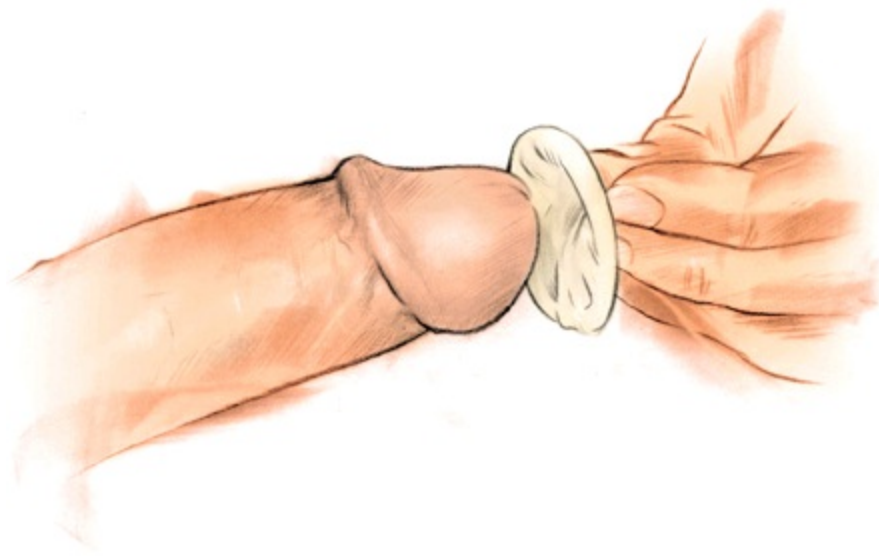
- Whatever your age, sex, or sexual experience, you could be at risk. Once it became apparent that AIDS was not going to decimate the developed world (and despite the fact that it's still decimating the developing world), there was an arrogant conviction that protection was optional. Wrong; each day over a million people worldwide catch an STD. Also wrong is that STDs are solely the problem of the young and sexually active, who are, in fact, often informed and careful; older lovers – freshly divorced and convinced that they and their cohort are safe – are often not.
- Risk comes from exchange of body fluids, so think about saliva, blood, urine, and feces as well as semen and vaginal fluids. Penetration is key, but a scratch or bite that breaks the skin surface is also dangerous, as is oral sex. Yes, oral sex – it's the risk factor that everyone ignores because licking your lover through a condom seems so prissy, but infection is more than possible, and women are particularly at risk.
- One's main reassurances are the condom (male and female), the dam, and the medical glove – used for intercourse, anal sex, sex toys, and oral sex. Let's not pretend latex improves lovemaking; but sometimes you simply have to do what's needed.
- You probably know the drill, but let's revise condom care: store away from sunlight; don't keep past the sell-by date; use a new one for every intercourse; check for rips and tears; have the condom in place from the start to the end of sexual contact; if it splits, get emergency contraception. Above all, follow the World War II British army motto: "Put it on before you put it in."
- The condom test is a good way of knowing whether you have found a decent, sensible partner. If your newly found love won't use protection, you are in bed with a witless, irresponsible, and uncaring person.
- When your newly found love has become a long-standing and committed love, the way forward is for both of you to get tested before having unprotected sex, and then to stay

faithful. Is it unromantic to suggest testing? Yes, but it's also being realistic. Even if your partner has had only one other partner and that person has had only one other, and so on and on, you are still potentially linked with a host of unproven and unknown infections. If you love each other, testing is the best way of demonstrating that. If you don't love each other, even less reason to take things on trust.

- With sex toys used by non-long-term partners, slip a condom over before use, and between uses clean with antibacterial wipes or the sort of cleaning pads sold for the purpose in sex shops.
- Check yourselves regularly for anything unusual – itching, rashes, lumps, warts, discharge, fever, swollen glands, abdominal discomfort, and bleeding or pain during sex, urination, or defecation.
- Respond to symptoms by going for a checkup immediately. Sexual health clinic staff really have seen it all before. Most infections, if caught early, can be treated by antibiotics; the exceptions are herpes, some strains of hepatitis, and the HIV virus, which are for life (see [resources](#)). If you have contracted an STD, or have put yourself at risk of doing so, tell your current partner and seek clinical advice about whether you need to tell former ones.
- Regular medical checkups are a good idea even if you are both faithful; some STDs can lie dormant. Plus, of course, you can never be entirely certain of fidelity.



1 To use a condom, carefully remove it from the foil packet and check it is the right way round, ready to roll down.



2 Squeeze the end of the condom between forefinger and thumb and place it over his erect penis.



3 Use your other hand to unroll the condom gently down. Keep squeezing the end between forefinger and thumb.



4 Make sure the condom is rolled down the full length of the penis.

phone sex

Not the pay-for, professional, chat-line type – which doesn't seem to fit in a book such as this – but loving arousal between two people who know each other's real names and real natures. The limitations – just sound, no visuals, no touch – can drive separated partners mad with frustration, but can also be its main attraction. The world goes away and all that remains is pure pleasure and two voices.

With only sound as feedback, one needs to tell more, describe fully, be ultra-clear about progress. Codes will develop that signal each one's shifts of mood or movement; rises of volume or breathing pace when speeding up, slowing down, starting to come; favored words and phrases that trigger memories or fantasies. Create a scenario; take it in turns to tell a story; ask intimate questions and answer them; make a confession of lust or love. For her in particular, fingers, vibrator, and sound will likely do it all; if he hankers for the visuals too, get her to do it in front of a mirror and describe herself ([see mirrors](#)).

Once supremely in sync, slide into control games. There is a special arousal in being directed long-distance – the other's voice alone telling one to “stop ... start ... pause” while one fights the temptation to tip over. And there is a special pleasure in knowing that your lover is being aroused solely by your direction, and is doing precisely what you instruct. If in charge, keep yourself simmering too, so that when the other is on the edge, you can first give them permission to “come now,” then immediately join them in climax.

words

“For women ... the G-spot is in the ears,” said author Isabel Allende, but his blood too can be roused by the right tone. Mutual vocabulary is essential; tastes are highly individual, and largely non-negotiable, and what one may feel is arousing, the other may think is too crude, clinical, or aggressive.

With a new partner – or with an old partner but a new word – whisper and calibrate the response; if there is a flinch, don’t use it again. If it’s you who’s flinching, say so and together work out an arousing alternative. There are more than 250 words for penis in the English language and 200 for clitoris; if none of these play, like the couple in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, christen John Thomas and Lady Jane yourselves.

If you aren’t comfortable talking dirty but want to be, practise key phrases while you are self-pleasuring alone. If you aren’t comfortable talking dirty and don’t want to be, relax; there is no requirement.

technology

Has had a bad press, due to addiction, cyberaffairs, and so on. But don't blame the medium; its opportunities outweigh its problems, and in any case, whenever there is a new human development, it comes with down- as well as upsides. So long as you are not using the Internet as a bolt hole to escape real relationships, technology is a good idea for the same reasons that [phone sex](#) is: it offers a new take new possibilities, and fills a need in a world where love can be forced to span oceans.

Obvious is that the Internet is a key resource for inspiration and ideas. There is a wealth of material out there: erotica, help lines, online counseling, and special-interest websites for every taste and a few undreamed of; particularly charming is the one that tells you how to make your own sex toys from melons, balloons, and empty bottles of washing-up liquid. Online coverage of sex is expanding so quickly that it would be pointless to attempt a listing; simply surf.

This is not a book about finding a sexual partner, so let's pass over Internet dating except to repeat the usual warnings about safety, which are these. However close one may feel to someone one has been chatting with online, treat them as one would any blind – unseen and unknown – date; that is, with care. Don't give out details; don't meet alone without safety nets; don't take it personally if, on meeting, there is no chemistry and they run off into the night. Reputable dating sites say all this in their guidelines – read, learn, and bear in mind that the nature of the Internet creates speedy yet false intimacy that may cloud your judgment.

Using new technology for erotic purposes, on the other hand, is the ultimate in safe sex – no exchange of body fluids involved. Text message, e-mail, webcams, teledildonics can all be used to wind each other up to fever pitch during the working day prior to extended evening action, to navigate more extended separations, and to play out dangerous or impractical fantasies without risk. For word-based text and e-mail, the key is in the description (where you are, what you are wearing, what you are doing to yourself, what you would like to do to the other). Don't be held back by fear of spelling and grammar – it's irrelevant and in any case too much control over the protocols of language can not only inhibit but come across online as just too manicured. Yet equally, don't aim to talk dirty – in black and white it can seem harsh or simply silly. Instead just say what's happening, moment by moment, what you are doing, imagining, wanting, above all, feeling.

Feedback may not be instant, so bridge the gaps between sending and receiving; she in particular has to learn to keep herself at pitch despite pauses until climax is imminent. Vibrators really come into their own here.

frequency

The right frequency for sex is as often as you both enjoy it. You can no more have “too much” sex than you can over-empty a toilet cistern (*see [excesses](#)*), though he can cut his short-term fertility by having too many ejaculations, and you don’t want to make intercourse such an anxious business that you have to stick to a daily timetable. Two or three times a week is a statistical average; new couples have it much oftener, established couples typically less. Some people do stick to a pretty regular schedule – others like intensive weekends at intervals.

The people who stick strictly to coital orgasm are usually opting for fewer climaxes than those who mix coitus with oral, manual, and other plays, because these increase the number of climaxes most men can get in a session. You should devise your own mix, in the light of your own responses: if one partner needs more, the accessory methods are useful to supply their needs and match them to yours.

Frequency falls off normally with age (*see [age](#)*), but there is no age when you won’t, on some special occasion, surprise yourself. Don’t be compulsive about frequency and don’t panic about surveys, which are often based on respondent exaggeration. Realize there will be times when one of you just doesn’t feel like it – through preoccupation, fatigue, or a traumatized response to important life events like birth or death – and don’t enforce a timetable on your partner or on yourself. If it’s still not happening, check the physicals, medications, fatigue, stress, and so on, then wonder whether anger or resentment is the root cause. It isn’t any kind of failure to ask for expert help (*see [resources](#)*).

priorities

Not a problem when we start a relationship; everything gets moved aside in the name of sex. As we settle, it is sex that gets moved aside. The Kinsey Institute says that contemporary women have less sex than their 1950s counterparts because they have so little uncommitted time in their lives; a finding that would ring true for many.

Deciding to prioritize sex may be guilt-inducing; we don't want to compromise other commitments and put our pleasure before our duties. But actually, once one realizes that sex is not an indulgence but a necessity, it all becomes easier. Keep a diary and see what can be canceled or put on hold. Book in one night a week and one weekend a month. Don't aim to make love but just to talk, embrace, be together; sex will happen if it's meant to. Usually, given time and space, it is meant to.

Add children and the whole thing becomes both more difficult and more essential. Difficult because it's inconvenient to incorporate sex into family life, essential because it needs to happen in order to keep love fueled and the family together. Sex can't be put on hold until the children are grown; if it is, the relationship may walk out the door at about the same time as the offspring fly the nest – or worse, well before. So act now. With toddlers, who for safety reasons one can't simply ban from the bedroom, enforce an early bedtime and buy a baby monitor. With older children, fit a lock to the bedroom door and state clearly when you are uninterruptable. If caught in flagrante, stay calm – children will take their cue from your emotions, and if you are unembarrassed they will be untroubled. Alternatively, leave them with grandparents, friends, or sitters while you take serious and extended private time. Ignore any qualms here; sex will make you a better parent, not a worse one.

seduction

If used in the traditional definition of the word – “to entice someone into an act that they will probably regret” – not good. The ultimate seducer, Casanova, incidentally, was enticed, pressured, and forced just as much as he did the enticing, and not only regretted but sometimes actively resented his sexual liaisons.

If used to mean “to woo someone into sex when you both want it,” much better; a validation manifested in the willingness to make the effort. Attention, compliment, clear intention, light touch, a drawing in and drawing on, the assumption that one person is willing to woo, and the other is worth the wooing; all this is in itself immensely persuasive.

In an established relationship, always at least try to respond to seduction. Men have less choice here – if they really don’t want to, they often simply can’t – but neither sex will be seducible in the context of a looming deadline or a screaming child, though both he and she can still offer affection and open arms. You should at least be willing to touch and kiss for a few minutes to see if your body will respond; it often does, even if you are convinced it’s not going to. It should be added that it’s not a partner’s duty to have sex, nor their right to demand sex – and both sides should be willing to take no for an answer.

In a new or potential relationship, reacting to seductive moves is a different game. Rules vary from culture to culture, but a sound guideline is to say yes if you want to and, more important, if you are sure you will still be comfortable with the decision the morning after and when sober. Never say yes if you feel out of control (via alcohol, drugs, emotional blackmail), out of guilt or duty, or if you can’t practice safe sex. If a new partner insists on physicality earlier than you want it, their pleasure is more important to them than your comfort and they are therefore not worthy of you. All this applies to him just as much as to her. Say a clear no and trust to your instincts.

There are currently some charming websites on the Internet offering “seduction skills” that are really camouflaged training courses – usually for him – on how to be more socially competent, how to find out what a woman wants and then genuinely and affectionately deliver; the result of such training is likely to be an increased ability to commit and to make that commitment work. There are also some truly appalling websites for him and for her, and even some books, that talk of “victim” or “prey” and then suggest manipulations such as “make her feel insecure” or “don’t call, make him sweat.” This is abusive, whichever sex does it.

The Barefoot Doctor says, instead: “Humbly, confidently make your desires known to all relevant parties, then let go and wait.” That would work well for most of us.

bathing



bathing

a splendid overture or tailpiece

Bathing together is a natural concomitant of sex and a splendid overture or tailpiece. Taking an ordinary bath together has a charm of its own, though someone has to lean against the plumbing. Soaping one another all over (rinse off before penetration or risk allergies to the lather, particularly for her) and drying one another are “skin games” that lead naturally to better things; after intercourse, a bath together is a natural, gentle comeback to domesticity or work. There are now luxurious large baths and Jacuzzis on offer, as well as hot tubs for outside, year-round bathing entertainment.

Actual coitus is possible, and fun, in the shower if your heights match; a showerhead is often the only convenient point in most houses or hotels for attaching a partner’s hands. Don’t pull the fixture down, however – it isn’t weight-bearing. Movable shower attachments also offer possibilities for water stimulation, but don’t aim it forcibly into the vagina – water under pressure, like air, can do internal damage.

No ordinary domestic or hotel bath is big enough for intercourse without punishing your elbows. Besides the novelty, there isn’t much point anyway. It’s easier with her on top, and sex toys can be bought waterproof for use by the one outside the bath on the one in it.

Sex and outdoor bathing is a different matter, but check local customs and laws. The whole idea of intercourse in water is that it's like weightlessness or flying – a woman who is too big for all those Hindu climbing and standing postures becomes light enough to handle, and one can prop her at angles no acrobat could hold. Meanwhile, there is the sea, after dark, when it's warm enough – on a gradually shelving beach one can have enough privacy even by day, and even re-emerge clothed: spectators will take it for lifesaving. A pool has extras like steps and useful handholds.

Water doesn't hinder friction, though its relative chill may mean that it takes some brisk rubbing to get an erection even in a very eager male. It might be a good idea to insert before going in, if possible, or for the woman to wear a diaphragm; seawater could trigger infections and chlorinated pool water might just possibly be an irritant, as it is to the eyes. You can have excellent straight intercourse lying in the surf if you can get a beach to yourselves, but sand is a problem, and keeps appearing for days afterwards. A floating mattress is effectively a water bed, but it's hard to stay on it without concentrating.

We have heard of people combining coitus with swimming, and even scuba diving, but they gave no practical details. Underwater coitus, if more than a token contact, would use up vast amounts of air because of the over-breathing that goes with orgasm.

Sadly, water sex isn't fundamentally safe sex; condoms can slip off or be affected by the water, heat, or chemicals, while spermicides may wash away and water-based lubricants simply dissolve. To enjoy any of the above approaches safely, you both need to be infection-free, contraceptively protected, and sure of your fellow bathers.

beds



beds

take one another at any hour of the night and relax together immediately afterwards

Still the most important piece of domestic sexual equipment. Really enthusiastic sex usually involves, at one time or another, almost every piece of furniture in the house, at least experimentally, but the bed is its commonest venue. Most beds on the market are designed by people who think they are intended to sleep on. The problem arises from the fact that the ideal surface for most kinds of intercourse needs to be rather harder than is comfortable for a whole night's sleep. One solution is to have two beds, one for sex and the other for sleeping, but this is a counsel of affluence, and in any case the need to move disrupts the best part of the night – the total relaxation that follows

complete love. Enormous or circular beds look suggestive, but have no real advantages over a full-size double bed.

There are a few points we would consider before giving a seal of approval. First, since one uses the sides as well as the surface, the height needs to be right. The top of the mattress should be exactly level with the man's pubic bone – then, if he puts her on or over it, she will be at the right height from in front or from behind. For some operations, especially bondage scenes if you like them, bedposts are essential, preferably tall ones, like those that hold up the canopies of antique beds, but not a footboard, as you may want to use the end of the bed for bending her over, backwards or forwards (see [ligottage](#), and [ropework](#)). Massive old bed frames have great advantages in that they don't rattle or collapse. The mattress needs to be as hard as you can tolerate for comfortable sleep. A double bed is essential; anything less forfeits the chief sexual joy of living and sleeping together – the fact that you can take one another at any hour of the night when both want it, and relax together immediately afterwards. If you have room, have a single bed as well, in case either partner is sick and feels more comfortable solo – twin beds have no place in a full sexual relationship.

Besides the bed itself, you need four pillows – two very hard to go under the buttocks, and two soft to sleep on. The room must be warm at all times of the year – warm enough to sleep without getting chilled, and without nightclothes if you wish. Duvets are generally better than blankets; they move with you as you move and don't restrict. Water beds, now reminiscent of glitzy glam and lava lamps, and only encountered rarely, nevertheless produce extraordinary sensations, and they have a natural period of resonance that tends to take over – one has to move in their rhythm, but this in itself is a stimulating constraint.

kisses



kisses

a mere touch or a second penetration

These, at one level, don't require teaching, but it's easy to be so set on insertion that one overlooks them (see [real sex](#)). Lip and tongue kisses add immensely to lovemaking in all face-to-face positions. Breast kisses are essential if the woman isn't to miss a whole range of feeling, while genital kisses (see [mouth work](#)) are a tender resource on their own. Kisses can be put anywhere on the body; they can be given with lips, tongue, penis, labia, or eyelashes – mouth kisses range from a mere touch to the kiss *à la*

cannibale, which leaves a bruise.

A lot of people maintain mouth contact continuously throughout intercourse, and prefer face-to-face positions for this reason. The deep tongue kiss can either be a second penetration, the man's tongue imitating exactly the rhythm of what's going on elsewhere, or she can give it, penetrating him, to call the rhythm. Even without any penetration, some people favor a tongue battle, which can last minutes or even hours, bringing several orgasms for the woman; this form of non-genital heavy petting is called *marâchignage*. If you are in private, move on to breasts, and go from there.

Another pleasure is to make her a carpet of flowers, by covering every inch of her body with small, close kisses: then she can reply, using lipstick to mark where she has been. From there it's only a little way to doing the same with a tongue tip (see [tongue bath](#)): moreover, unlike a man, she has two mouths to kiss with, and some women use them beautifully. Eyelashes too can be used for nipple, lip, glans, and skin kisses.

If he hasn't at least kissed her mouth, shoulders, neck, breasts, armpits, fingers, palms, toes, soles, navel, genitals, and earlobes, he hasn't really kissed her: it's no trouble to fill in the gaps for the sake of completeness and makes a touching compliment. And there is no reason why she shouldn't do the same for him.

A good mouth kiss should leave its recipient breathless but not asphyxiated (leave an airway open), and nobody likes their nose squashed into their face. Clean your teeth before making love, and if you are having whisky, garlic, and so on, both of you have it.

pattes d'araignée



pattes d'araignée

the whole essence is in the extreme lightness of touch

Literally “spider’s legs”; the French description of tickling erotic massage using the pulps of the fingers with the lightest possible touch, aiming to stimulate not so much the skin as the almost invisible skin hairs: not on the genitals, but all the next most sensitive places – nipples and around, neck, chest, belly, insides of arms and thighs, armpits, hollow of the back, soles and palms, scrotum, space between it and the anus. Use both hands; keep a steady progression of movement going with one, and make surprise attacks with the other.

The whole essence is in the extreme lightness of the touch – more electric than tickling. [Feathers](#), [skin gloves](#), or [vibrators](#) deliver a quite different sensation. If you are agile, don’t forget you have toes as well as fingers, and hair in various places, including the eyelashes, to vary the sensation; the real and original French style using the fingertips is difficult to learn but unforgettable by either sex. It’s one of the two general skin stimulants (the other is the [tongue bath](#)) that work even on not very skin-conscious males.

friction rub

The original meaning of shampoo, which is gentle kneading massage all over. Much more pleasant if you rub each other all over with a condom-compatible massage oil. Sit on something that doesn't matter and rub together or in turns. (Steer well clear of vulnerable body parts like scars and infected skin, and never put firm pressure on organs or on places where the bone is near the skin.) She kneads his muscles, with fingers and a vibrator as well if they like; he concentrates on her breasts, buttocks, loins, and neck. With practice, these sensations are well worth cultivating.

This always ends in genital hand work, then intercourse, followed by a bath together. Semen would be the ideal medium in this context, but sadly it's a case of too little and too late. Bottled lotion, however, offers a practical substitute for this particular fantasy.

feathers



feathers

try soft feathers for exoticism, wiry ones for arousal

Recommended by some for skin stimulation (of breasts, body surface generally, more than the actual genitals, and palms and soles). Try soft feathers, such as peacock feathers, for exoticism, stiff wiry feathers for arousal, or the feather “mops” sold in sex shops (see [pattes d'araignée](#)).

aphrodisiacs

History and urban myth are littered with mentions of “aphrodisiac” foods – these are either symbolic (phallic asparagus and so on), olfactory (fish, tomatoes straight off the plant, which smell sexy), or magical (Brazilian women were reputedly told to pour coffee through their panties and then get their boyfriends to drink it). The *Kama Sutra* recommends spicy foods; Casanova relied on oysters; Aztec king Montezuma claimed it was the fifty cups of hot chocolate he drank a day that kept him capable of serving his harem.

It’s an understandable obsession. Desire is so vital and lack of desire so devastating that humankind desperately wants to know the secret of creating and controlling it. Until recently, however, it has been the stuff of dreams; the active ingredients in most reputed aphrodisiacs, including the aforementioned chocolate, are actually so small that they would have little effect, and the ones that work by overstimulation – such as traditional Spanish fly and its modern counterpart, amyl nitrate – can be life-threatening.

In this respect, we have a lot to thank current pharmacology for. Testosterone for both, dopamine for her, an upcoming nasal spray that activates brain receptors; no point in being more specific – the landscape will have changed even before this book goes to press. Particularly intriguing is the idea of the antidepressant that caused research subjects to climax uncontrollably whenever they yawned, though it doesn’t sound altogether practical if one gets tired or bored on a regular basis.

Science is only just discovering that emotion can also be an aphrodisiac. While festering anger and real fear kill desire, mild versions of each can have the opposite effect. Hence couples who leap into bed after a fight, hence the effect of edgy sex where uncertainty breeds passion, and “safe” anxiety breeds arousal. Grief, surprisingly, has an effect too; if you find yourselves making love after a recent bereavement, you are neither heartless nor unusual but affirming life in the most fundamental of ways.

In the end, for regular use, most lovers will simply take Euripides’ advice and have just a little wine for lubrication and relaxation, along with their food of choice. Because here’s the real secret: aphrodisiacs work largely because you think they will. If caviar, champagne, and strawberries create the right mood for you, they will work; if a hamburger and fries are set in the context of “tonight’s the night,” they will work just as well. No aphrodisiac, it should be added, is a lifesaver or comes up to the combined effect of “the time and the place and the loved one together.”

fantasy



fantasy

as the mind dreams, the body responds

The reality is that most of us fantasize – 90 percent of women and almost 100 percent of men. Psychologists would call it a bridge between forbidden urges and the socialized and civilized part of us – the child gets to play, to love, to rebel, to hurt, and to be hurt, but safely and while staying “good.” Physiologists would say that it pump-primes: as the brain dreams, the body responds – the tendency to fantasize may be linked with testosterone, which would probably explain the gender difference. But don’t take that difference too seriously – some men, particularly under stress, hardly fantasize at all, while in some women, fantasy on its own can trigger orgasm.

Let’s demolish some myths here and now; fantasy isn’t the refuge of the undersexed or those who aren’t getting it – the more arousable and experienced we are, the more we are likely to fantasize. We may sometimes get spooked, yet such dreams are nothing to be scared of and almost always we fantasize not as a step to doing something in real life but because we never will. (Nighttime dreams, which feel infinitely more alarming because they feel completely outside of our control, are equally safe.) What we do want is to direct our own movie, with ourselves in the starring role – being worshipped, being taken, having sex with someone unavailable, doing things that are forbidden, and all of

these in the middle of the high street, at the top of the Empire State Building, with the entire starting lineup of our home team or with all the cheerleaders. We know it will never happen – that would be the point, and also the reassurance.

If the idea appeals but you have difficulty even beginning, it may be that you feel you need to be “creative.” Relax – this is not an Oscar winner you are directing, and in any case, all fantasy has its starting point in real life; turn to a strong personal memory (or a favorite piece of erotica), rerun, replay – and then adapt. She is more likely to make a story of it. He is more likely to have single scenes, often with different partners. The key is letting the film roll, no hesitation. This is where you get to be in complete control.

As for telling each other, that’s not compulsory – though if silence is guilt-based, it’s a good idea to at least tell a therapist. Equally, a partner’s fantasy that seriously disturbs is a subject for discussion and adjustment; no one should pressure the other to accept what they hate. Uninhibited partners will tell each other about their fantasies (try free-associating just before orgasm if you are shy). Really communicating partners look for them and put them on the menu unannounced – there is no more complete communication. If the thing itself doesn’t turn you on equally, the response will. So say one provocative sentence each in turn, to build the story. Set each other homework, to produce an “essay” as foreplay for next time. Ask your partner to tell (or give) you the thing he or she would most like to see you wearing when you come together for lovemaking and then, next time, wear it. After a few big orgasms together, all but the oddest fantasies get to be shared.

It’s tempting to think that the best next step is action. But be careful of crossing the bridge from fantasy to reality; the whole point of fantasy is that what you dream about is sometimes what you are rightly wary of doing. In particular, the cold light of day can make “additional players” a threat; if your fantasy is of a threesome, better to close your eyes and pretend that your partner’s hands belong to someone else – this is a far safer option than recruiting crowd scenes ([see foursomes and moresomes](#)).

Role-play is a different matter, more acceptable because entirely under your control. In the privacy of one’s own room – with or without the addition of a few strategic props – play the master, the mistress, the handsome doctor, or the winsome country maid. He can be the Turkish sultan, whose chosen concubine enters the bedchamber naked and in darkness dives under the covers at the foot of the bed, wriggling her way up alongside him to await his pleasure. She can equally well be Gulbeyaz – the sultan’s wife in Byron’s *Don Juan* – receiving a favored stud. Take it in turns.

breathing

Not just a mystic ritual – though the *Kama Sutra* focuses on it – but a way of connecting before sex. Standing, sitting, or lying, use belly-to-belly breathing. Keep going until you are in sync, then slow down together, breath by breath, until deep and steady. (If breath is unpleasant, cut back on spicy food and cigarettes; if it still causes a flinch, book a dental appointment.)

To move to arousal, breathe in and up as if through the top of the head; then let the breath go with an audible sound, pelvis rocking slightly forwards, pelvic floor muscles pulling up (see [pompoir](#)). Done before lovemaking, this Tantric “fire breath” quickly builds sexual energy; done during the act, it helps you move together.

Use breathing, too, in order to pace orgasm. He can breathe through the nose and into his belly, slowly and steadily, to fool his body into holding back; once ready to push towards climax, he should then shift to short, sharp mouth breathing. Her added trick, when finding it hard to come, is to do whatever she is not doing – either holding her breath rather than letting it go or vice versa.

For some, arousal is linked not to breathing but actively to not breathing; block access to oxygen and adrenaline naturally kicks in to boost sensation. The Inuit knew this long ago; the French Foreign Legionnaires brought it back to Europe from their wars in Indo-China. You may already stop breathing spontaneously at the moment of climax; to replicate this deliberately, simply hold your breath as you hit the point of no return (see [plateau phase](#)). But even if asked, don't block a partner's airway; the asphyxiation in the 1970s erotic film classic *Ai no Corrida* may look sensuous, but he dies in the end. So let's not go into detail about how; get the same sensation safely by intercourse head-down (see [inversion](#)).

tongue bath



tongue bath

go systematically over every square inch with long, slow, broad tongue strokes

Going systematically over every square inch of a partner, tied if they like, with long, slow, broad tongue strokes – keep a glass of water handy to moisten your mouth, or bite your tongue gently to keep saliva flowing. Start behind, turn them, and cover the front surface after, so as to be in position to go on to coition or hand and mouth work. If the woman gives this, she does it with the man free or staked out, then covers the whole available surface equally systematically with slow strokes of her open vulva followed by leisurely stimulation or riding astride – the whole package reputedly making up the woman's ploy in traditional Croatian intercourse. Mini versions cover particular areas in the same way.

blowing



blowing can drive your partner wild

Not the slang sense (see [mouth work](#)), but quite simply making a current of air on the (preferably pre-wetted) skin of any part of the body, either from the lips or from a hair dryer on a cool setting. The best way to moisten an erogenous area is with the tongue, though one could simply begin as a partner emerges from shower or bath; for more extensive operations, use lotion or water sprayed from the sort of fine mister used for house plants. Alternatively, most sex shops supply variations on tingling rubs and sprays.

Air on a wet sensitive surface produces a sensation that can drive some people of either sex out of their mind – experiment on a small scale, using your natural equipment (saliva and breath). In the case of earlobes, breathe in, not out, or you will deafen your partner. Elsewhere, use steady, continuous exhalation with the lips about an inch from the skin. The natural sequel to a [tongue bath](#). For a bigger operation, use the hair dryer – the result is far wilder than the conventional routine with feathers, except for palms and soles – try mixing the two by hitching a couple of feathers to the dryer nozzle on threads (see [feathers](#)). Some words of warning: never use a strong air source (see [inflators](#), and [hazards](#)), and never blow into the vagina or any other body orifice (except the mouth).

bites



bites

gentle nibbling, hard pressure, love bruises

Hindu eroticians classified these at huge length. Gentle nibbling (of the penis, breasts, skin, fingers, ears, labia, clitoris, armpit hair) is part of the general excitatory repertoire. Hard bites at the moment of orgasm excite some people, but for most, like other over-painful stimuli, they are a turnoff. Some people tend to bite more than others; remember that often your partner will do to you what they really want done to them – being aware of this is the great secret of communicating sex.

Love bruises, on the neck and elsewhere, which some lovers find act like a constant playback, setting off more lovemaking every time they are seen, aren't made by biting but by strong, continuous suction kisses; practice on your palm. Check before starting that it's acceptable to leave a mark – if not, make the suction slight. If it goes too far, the application of an ice cube will ease out the damage, then use arnica and cover with makeup. Sharper nips to the skin aren't as a rule erotic.

Be careful of biting genitals at all, or any part of the body at or near orgasm; the jaws may go into spasm and you can clamp down really hard – in fact, don't ever have an orgasm with a breast, penis, clitoris, or finger in your mouth. The need to bite can be taken out on something neutral like cloth or hair, and should always be if there is any

risk of unsafe sex. This seems to be a case where the mammalian program of reflexes is over-tough for human enjoyment.

l'onanisme



l'onanisme

climaxing solo with a partner – one of the biggest gifts you can give

However much sex you have, you will probably still want simple, own-hand masturbation – not only during periods of separation but simply when you feel like another orgasm, or feel like having a different experience of being in control of your own body. (She may also use it to ease period pain or bring an end to menstruation.)

Originally the subject of uninhibited celebration – the ancient Egyptians thought that their entire world had been created from the god Atum's masturbatory ejaculation – self-pleasuring soon began to get bad press. The critical comments began when humankind realized that semen was linked with conception and the religious texts started claiming that “spilling seed” was wasteful; then eighteenth-century Swiss physician Samuel-Auguste Tissot linked masturbation with blurred vision and fueled an enduring – and utterly erroneous – myth. Today, the hang-ups are different, but still as strong, so let's be clear: if one masturbates it doesn't mean one has a bad sex life and if one's partner masturbates it doesn't mean that he (or she) isn't satisfied. Solo masturbation is different from couple sex, but not inferior, in the same way as oral sex is different from intercourse; we can – perhaps even should – indulge in and enjoy both.

Whether alone or together, don't settle into habit. One's own preferred way will be quicker and easier, but can make for less flexibility around routes to orgasm – variety will keep all options open. So change, as a matter of habit. Shift position, grind into a

pillow, use a dildo in whatever orifice, play in the bath, experiment with a vibrator. All these are instructions to him and to her. The Internet has a thousand more suggestions.

Loving couples don't just accept each other's masturbatory patterns, but welcome them as a way to learn; climaxing solo in front of a partner is one of the biggest gifts you can give. He needs to observe closely; pioneering sex researchers Masters and Johnson report never having seen two women do it exactly the same way. She needs to accept that his masturbatory force is focus, not aggression; if she is aroused by it rather than wary of it, that will move everything to a higher plane.

Some women feel left out or rejected if they find their partner masturbating; if you feel vibrations when he thinks you are asleep and want to get in on the act, finish him yourself at full speed, or better, start slow, then stop, tie him, and make him watch you masturbate yourself, slowly and with style, before you put him out of his misery. The unexpected sight of a woman giving herself an orgasm when he can't move is unbearably exciting for most men. Make sure he can't get loose. Watching each other take the last orgasm separately but together makes a great end to any session.

fighting

The occasional arguments, that all lovers experience would have nothing to do with sex if some couples weren't directly excited by them, often without knowing it – that real anger has erotic effects is a matter of true folklore. But let's be clear. Neither she nor he should ever put up with real violence or anything that doesn't stop when you say stop – this kind of behavior will continue or more usually escalate, however much the aggressor apologizes (*see [resources](#)*). Real, spiteful violence from a partner is a common cause of death or injury. Don't put up with it, and don't give any second chances – leave and/or go to the police. Sadistic bullies are incurable by love.

Back to the main route. As we have several times remarked, our image of love is uptight about the elements of forcefulness that exist in normal sexuality – which makes us prone to mix erotic energy with real spite or real anger, and confuse two quite distinct things. To need some degree of energy in sex, rather than the glutinous, unphysical kind of love that the tradition propagates, is statistically pretty normal. But the way to meet this need isn't to use fights to fuel it, but rather to learn the purposive uses of play. True, the over-gentle spouse is likely to be blocked about aggression, and nonplussed by the demand “Now take me.” He (or she) has probably been taught not to treat a partner like that – if he is excessively over-gentle, in fact, he may be sitting on a strong need to do so. But if these things can once be talked about, you can help him (or her) learn the uses of sexual play without the need to mix it up with real day-to-day angers and frustrations that can get out of hand. If he is over-gentle, don't needle him, teach him.

With a normally energetic partner, don't be ashamed if you really argue (most people do), but don't treat it as a kick, or a way of turning on a partner's sexual arousal. Use play. Cultivate pillow talk to unblock fantasies – ask each other just short of orgasm: “What would you like to do to me, like me to do to you, now?” – “now” meaning at the fantasy level (*see [birdsong at morning](#)*). As nearly always with human beings, symbolisms are generally bigger kicks than over-literal enactments.

Separately, some couples get a lot of fun out of extended struggles, premeditated or impromptu – “love wrestling” in the old tradition. (It's maybe why same-sex wrestling – often with the addition of mud – is seen as a turn-on nowadays, and also why Sumo wrestlers are significant sex symbols in their own country.) Enthusiasts go in for elaborate handicaps: time limits, no biting or scratching, and so on. Most people find fairly robust but reasonable tussling quite enough, others play elaborate finding-fault-and-spanking games (don't play these over real faults). Women (and men) who enjoy an extra sensation of helplessness differ whether they feel this more held down or tied up: either sex can take out quite a lot of the energy component in the actual process of working for orgasm. Once understood, none of this range of needs is scary, and can be stopped spilling out of sex into cruelty, or the normal resentments felt by any two people who live together. Actually, it tends to discharge these.

Nothing we have said excludes the tenderness of sex. If you haven't learned that

sexual energy can be tender and tenderness forceful, you haven't begun to play as real lovers. If you do have a real fight, make sure to end it in bed. At least it's the best way to finish.

main courses



postures



postures

even the most accomplished musician has to practise, though in love, once learned is never forgotten

Endless time has been spent throughout history, chiefly by non-playing coaches, in describing and giving fancy names to upwards of six hundred of these – collecting them is obviously a human classificatory hobby. Most of the non-extreme postures come naturally, and few of the extreme ones merit more than a single visit out of curiosity. The only part we regret is the loss of the fancy names, Arabic, Sanskrit, or Chinese, that they have been given across cultures and down the centuries.

Most people now know the obvious ones and have learned which make for quick and slow orgasm and how to use them in series. A few people, either for symbolic or anatomical reasons, can only achieve an orgasm in one or two of them.

Inspection will indicate which of these fit special situations, such as pregnancy, disability, height differences, and so on. Only trial will indicate which work best, or at all, orgasm-wise. Couples frequently start by trying the whole lot, but nearly inevitably end up with one or two, going back to the book for special occasions.

Some of the really wild fantasies in Oriental manuscripts do have a point – the woman astride in Mughal pictures who is balancing lighted lamps on her hands, head,

and shoulders or shooting at a target with a bow is only showing that she can bring the man off with her vaginal muscles alone while keeping the rest of her still (see [pompoir](#)). Others are mystical or merely gymnastic. All the poses we show are practicable (and have been tried for fit, if not to orgasm) and more or less rewarding according to inclination. What we do suggest is that for any new trick you arrange a practice session in anticipation. The time to learn new figures isn't on the ice rink or the dance floor. The most common reason that an elaboration you both wanted – whether it's a fancy posture or some dodge such as bondage, which needs to be quickly and efficiently set up – disappoints is the attempt to use it in actual, excited lovemaking “from cold”, so that you mess about, lose the thread, and wish you hadn't bothered with it or blame whoever suggested it. The usual and regrettable outcome is never to try again.

Not that rehearsal need be cold-blooded or taken out of actual lovemaking. Anticipation being good in itself, you first fantasize about it, sit down together, plan, and rehearse. Then fit the actual trial-for-size into the waiting periods between bouts – when you are both excited enough not to feel silly, but not ready to go completely: try it while waiting for the next erection. Remember, even the most accomplished musician has to practice, though in love, once learned is never forgotten. If it the works first time, you should get the erection – in that case, go where it takes you. This means that you can rehearse something new for each special occasion, mastering every movement, but quite deliberately holding back and not playing it live until the appointed time. Having held back will make for even more reward when that time arrives.

To practice things, you must try in full erection; make the effort and try the new posture when you have one – either without movement, if you are set on waiting till later, or switching after a few strokes to something else. Of course, if it takes over, as it may, you might as well carry on, and turn practice into performance there and then.



postures

rehearse something new for each special occasion

hand work for her

Sex for all males and many females begins in the hand-work class – both when we start to discover our own bodies and when we start to have access to each other's. For both sexes it is basic training – in mutual sex, good hand work is never superseded. A couple who can masturbate each other really skillfully can do anything else they like, and a generation that has been brought up to masturbate with enjoyment from preadolescence will have a flying start in forming some sensual attitudes. Hand work is not a “substitute” for vaginal intercourse, but something quite different, giving a different type of orgasm, and the orgasm one induces oneself is different again from orgasm induced by a partner. In the case of full intercourse, it's a preparation – to stiffen the man, or to give the woman one or more preliminary peaks before insertion. After intercourse, it is the natural lead-in to a further round.

He needs to notice how she masturbates herself. Most men neglect the labia in favor of the clitoris, but the whole pussy needs attention. Clitoral rubbing can be as mind-blowing for her as slow masturbation is for him, but it can be painful if it's unskillful, too hard, without lubrication (the clitoris produces none of its own), repeated too often or straight after an orgasm achieved in this way. She says: “The main difficulty from the man's point of view is that the ideal pressure point varies from hour to hour, so he should allow her to guide him to the right place. Most men think they know automatically, having succeeded once – they are often wrong.”

For preparation, the flat of the hand on the vulva with the middle finger between the lips, and its tip moving in and out of the vagina, while the ball of the palm presses hard just above the pubis, is probably the best method, though few women will climax from this alone. Steady rhythm is the most important thing, taking it from her hip movements, and alternating with gentle lip stretching – then a full attack on the clitoris and its hood with the forefinger or little finger, thumb deeply in the vagina (keep nails short). For faster response, he can hold her open with one hand and work gently with all the fingers of the other (in this case, she may need to be pinned down). He needs to switch to the tongue occasionally if she gets dry, because she won't realize until afterwards how sore she is (see [trigger points](#)).

As to full-hand penetration, most women pass, while others like several fingers, not only for the feeling of fullness but also the deep intimacy it involves. He should work up to this with one digit, then two, and so on; such “fisting” takes practice and trust.

hand work for him



hand work for him

a woman who knows how to masturbate a man – subtly, unhurriedly, and mercilessly will – almost always make a superlative partner

A woman who has the divine gift of lechery and loves her partner will masturbate him well, and a woman who knows how to masturbate a man – subtly, unhurriedly, and mercilessly – will almost always make a superlative partner. She needs intuitive empathy and real enjoyment of a penis, holding it in just the right place, with just the right amount of pressure and movement, timing her action in bursts to coincide with his feeling – stopping or slowing to keep him in suspense, speeding up to control his climax. Some men can't stand really proficient masturbation to climax unless securely tied (see [rope work](#)) and virtually none can hold still for slow masturbation (see [slow masturbation for him](#)).

The variation can be endless, even if she doesn't have the choice of foreskin back, foreskin not back, which again yield two quite distinct nuances. If he isn't circumcised, she will probably need to avoid rubbing the glans itself, except in pursuit of very special effects. Her best grip is just below the groove, with the skin back as far as it will go, and using two hands – one holding the penis steady, or fondling the scrotum, the other making a thumb-and-first-finger ring, or a whole-hand grip. She should vary this and, in prolonged masturbation, change hands often. The erotic manual *Les Paradis Charnel*

(1903) apparently suggests she join her hands, thumbs crossed, fingers interlaced, and make him a vagina, wetting her palms first with saliva – an old way of ending straight intercourse without risking pregnancy, though it isn't, of course, a safe contraceptive or protective method.

For a full orgasm, she sits comfortably on his chest or kneels astride him. During every extended sexual session, one orgasm – usually the second or third if he is lasting for that long – is well worth giving in this particular way: the French professionals who used no other method didn't only stay in business through fear of infection. It's well worth devoting time and effort to perfecting this technique – it fully expresses love, and can be domesticated in any bedroom.

Rolling the penis like pastry between the palms of two hands is another technique, best used for producing an erection rather than going for orgasm. For some occasions she can try to copy his own favorite method of self-masturbation. When she uses her own rhythm it can have a different and sometimes more startling effect.

mouth work for her



mouth work for her

give the woman dozens of preliminary orgasms and she will still want to go on from there

In the first half of the twentieth century, genital kisses, or rather the taboos on them, were a king pretext for divorce on grounds of perversity, cruelty, and so on. We have come some way since then – now there are textbooks on them, and they figure in films. Personal likes and dislikes apart, most people now know that, given safety constraints (*see [safe sex](#)*), they are one of the best things in sexual intimacy. Who goes first is clearly a matter of preference, but one can give the woman dozens of purely preliminary orgasms in this way, as many as she can take, and she will still want to go on from there, so the man had better save himself for later.

Normal genital odor is a big part of the genital kiss for both partners, which means that the parties should wash often, but not immediately beforehand: they ought to know each other well enough to say, if it's ever disagreeable. Contraceptives can upset it too. The marketers of intimate deodorants and vaginal wipes show evidence only of sexual inexperience – nobody wants peach sauce on, say, scampi. Seaweed odors or musk would be more in key. Many women are unaware of the extent to which their unique *cassiolette* is their secret weapon. Some men respond intensely to this natural scent without realizing the fact; it's also the ideal perfume fixative, and a touch behind the ears at a dance, in advance of, or instead of, the usual bottled perfume, can be deadly. His, by contrast, will please her more the longer she loves him. Wash regularly, and here as everywhere treat deodorants the way a chef would treat deflavorants. How the hippie

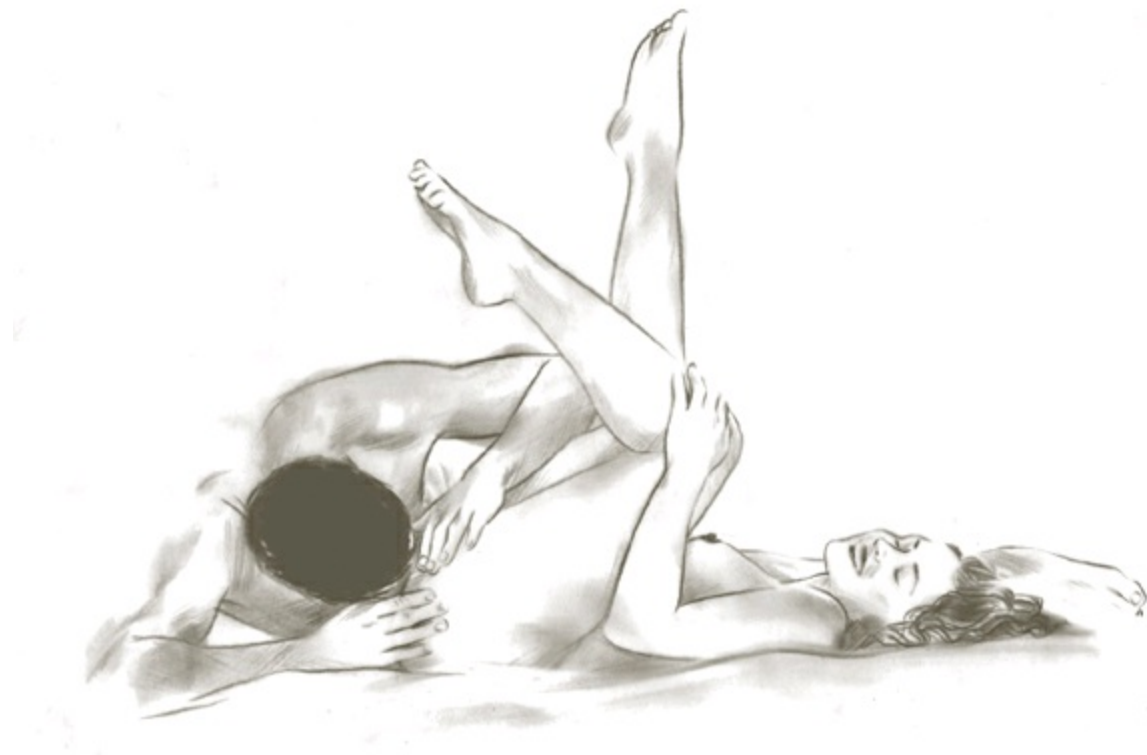
generation thought you could live the good sex life without washing defies explanation.

She can kneel astride and give herself, exactly as in a passionate mouth-to-mouth kiss, brushing first, then open and deeply, while he uses long tongue strokes from the vagina to the clitoris, with an extra twitch to her glans as he reaches it each time (see [clitoral pleasure](#)).

When it's his initiative, he can do worse than try the cascade position, if she is portable. This is really only a *soixante-neuf* standing up, but it gives her the unique sensation of an orgasm head-downwards. To get her there, he lays her faceup across the bed, head over the edge, stands astride her face, then bends over and picks her up, legs around his neck. She can return his kiss if she is acrobatic, but near orgasm she had far better slip him between her breasts or into her hand, and abandon herself to full orgasm.

The first genital kiss, to an inexperienced woman, is another scenario. Kneeling before her, "*vers le buisson ardent des femmes*", looks fine, but one simply can't reach to do more than nuzzle. We suggest this instead: with the woman faceup along the bed, he should sit on the edge half-facing her feet, kiss her all over, then reach over and pick up her farther leg and kiss her foot. He can then quickly slip his nearer elbow through her raised knee, open her, and kiss gently on the closed labia until she is ready for deeper and deeper tongue strokes.

Fewer and fewer women are now inhibited about being kissed, though rather more can't get pleasure from kissing the man. A number of women can't initially be got there at all without prolonged genital kissing, a fact that Indian love books recognize. For a very shy woman (or man), try it in the dark – but certainly try it.



mouth work for him



mouth work for him

one of the most moving gestures in the whole sexual experience

Good mouth work on her part is perhaps one of the most valued gifts a woman can give to a man, and well worth practicing to perfect technique. A spontaneous genital kiss to a man is one of the most moving gestures in the whole sexual experience.

She will probably get the best results with what the Chinese call the “jade flute” position – an instrument that is self-explanatory, and is played in the same way as a recorder, facing him, thumbs underneath, fingers on top. Her technique depends on her man – for instance, on whether or not he is circumcised. Not all men find tongue or lip contact with the glans pleasurable. For some it’s ecstasy, while others prefer foreskin movement over the covered glans with the shaft held tight. The various sorts of nibbling and so on described in sex books come naturally to most people. One finds them out on

a basis of teach and learn.

For a more active male position and a fast orgasm, she lies back – best is any position where he can face her feet so that his penis follows the natural curve of her throat – and he has oral coitus as fully and deeply as she can stand it. This is “deep throating” and isn’t one for a first night – it takes negotiation. She must keep her teeth well open, making him a vagina with her lips and tongue, then glide the penis back as far as she can, exhaling and finally swallowing to complete the penetration; he can then begin to thrust. He needs to keep a little control, to avoid being involuntarily bitten.

Some women do and some don’t like the man to go all the way and ejaculate (if they love him very much, that may make all the difference, but not always). Those who don’t can easily stop just short of getting him there and shift to another foyer (between the breasts, for example), or they can compress with both hands to gain time – this needs alertness and doesn’t always work. It’s also apt to wreck his orgasm.

Others once they are used to it don’t find the experience complete unless their lover does ejaculate. Eighteenth-century doctor John Hunter wrote: “The semen would appear both by smell and taste to be a mawkish kind of substance: but when held in the mouth it produced a warmth similar to spices.” If the slight bitterness, rather than the whole idea, is what she dislikes, it can easily be avoided by taking him really deeply and swallowing quickly and in one go so that it doesn’t hit the tongue. (If he is truly unpalatable, he should alter his diet to include more fruit.) With experienced women we guess it’s about fifty-fifty, come or not come; in any case, you can always ask, and partners soon learn each other’s tastes.

She says: “Gagging is a perfectly natural reflex action if something large is poked down your throat; so if she does gag, it may well not be because she hates it but because she can’t help herself. A large penis will also stretch the mouth quite a lot, so be considerate.” In this respect, pulling her head towards him without permission is one of the few almost unforgivable bedroom sins. He should always be sure to let her stay in control of the pace and depth of the kiss.

There are a minority of men who are unable to experience even the briefest of genital kisses before uncontrollably ejaculating – these should reserve it until they require a new erection, when it is a uniquely effective way of raising the dead.

clitoral pleasure

Unless you have been trapped in the jungle for the past fifty years, you are probably aware of what women have always known, experts have often denied, and sex researcher Shere Hite clearly substantiated in the mid-twentieth century: it's clitoral stimulation that delivers most female orgasms. For this reason, we devote a few paragraphs here to the topic.

Let's start with the question of validity. Those (usually male) sexologists who suggest that a vaginal orgasm is a signal of a more mature sexuality are ignoring two things. First, the biology of the situation, which suggests that as penis and clitoris are equivalent – which we now know they are – it's the clitoris one should be addressing if one wants to get the same brisk response from a woman as from a man. Second, female experience, which consistently endorses the fact that most women climax easily, quickly, and without stress from clitoral stimulation, whereas intercourse typically demands effort, concentration, and either a carefully chosen range of positions or – here we come back to square one – a clitorally targeted helping hand.

Given all this, the dedicated male player who longs to know what to do with a clitoris can do worse than refer back to his own, larger version. Movements with finger or tongue up and down the shaft, quick flicks across the tip, gentle sucking of the glans, highly targeted pressure on the “frenulum equivalent” where the hood retracts; these will all work as well for her as for him. He doesn't need to be clever, just follow his own instincts. One caveat only; scale down for size. Where he may like rough, she will seldom want anything but gentle and lubricated, which is why tongue work is often her medium of choice.

Does intercourse ever achieve the same effect? Of course it does – the symbolism alone makes it central to the whole performance. Many women whose physiology permits get supreme climaxes this way, and those penetration positions that stretch or nudge the clitoris (see [CAT](#)) are highly functional. But to solve this particular conundrum, most couples combine, choosing positions that allow hand or vibrator access – her on top or rear entry for preference (see [upper hands](#), [X position](#), [rear entry](#), and [bridge](#)).

Does intercourse alone work? Not necessarily, not always – and not if you slide a “should” or a “must” in there with it. Saying that a woman “should” climax with penetration is equivalent to saying that a man “should” climax through having his testicles pulled. Some do, some don't, and in any case each to their own. Defining the way to orgasm for either sex is, in our opinion, a red herring.

soixante-neuf

Both of you delivering mouth work to each other at the same time is fine but has some drawbacks. It needs attention and care to give your partner your best, and consequently you can't go berserk over it, as you can over mutual intercourse: impending orgasm, especially in the woman, just isn't compatible with careful technique, and the man can even be bitten. Another slight but, for some men, real defect is that in *soixante-neuf* the woman is the wrong way round for tongue work on the most sensitive surface of the glans (this explains the acrobatics in some Indian temple statues, which aim to get both mutuality and a better approach for the woman). Mutual genital kisses are wonderful, but if you are going to orgasm, it's usually better to take turns.

For some couples, the simultaneous, sixty-nine-type kiss really does represent the ultimate in sensation. Since loss of control will be complete, he should check first that she can handle his ejaculating into her mouth. The woman-on-top position in most books is all right, especially if she combines mouth work with hand work, but it gives the man a stiff neck. Especially good is the no-cushions position – head to tail on their sides, each with the under thigh drawn up as a cushion for the partner's head. The man can open her widely by slipping his arm in the crook of her upper knee.

The mutual kiss can be long or short; the short is just in passing – the long can last minutes or hours according to taste and speed. Both fit nicely between rounds of intercourse, as well as acting as hors d'oeuvres or alternatively a corpse reviver.

If, on the other hand, they are going alternately, let him start, preferably in this same no-cushions position, while she does very little. Then it can be her turn; or they can go on to intercourse, putting off fellatio until he has had one orgasm and a rest and is due for his next erection. In this way she can abandon herself, and watch her technique when she sucks him.

birth control



birth control

the manipulation involved in letting the woman put a condom on her man excites some people

The discovery that more than any other made carefree sex possible was hormonal contraception. Before that, it was down to plugging her vagina with crocodile dung or covering his penis with a length of animal intestine – and even then anxiety made impossible the kind of extended sexual play that's now available to everyone. As the saying went, couples sowed their wild oats on Saturday night and on Sunday prayed for crop failure. Women who have experienced the security of modern methods and discovered the play function of sex are not going to return willingly to the old insecurity. Neither are their partners.

The (justifiable) price of such freedom, however, is that for any methods apart from condoms, we now need expert guidance for prescription and usage. What follows, consequently, is not in-depth coverage – that should come from a health professional as part of a consultation (*see* [resources](#)) – but the Cook’s Tour for orientation purposes.

The pill is still the overall contraceptive of choice, despite its reliance on a good memory. Hormonal injections, implants, patches – and all variations and combinations thereof – work in roughly the same way and with the same effect, but don’t need to be remembered daily. Injections and implants are more permanent and so she needs to know that she won’t react badly to the hormones before going that route. Emergency contraception can be taken up to seventy-two hours (the pill) or five days (an IUD) after sex, useful at times of contraceptive disaster; an option used not, as the myths suggest, by irresponsible teens but in reality by forty-somethings whose lives are so rushed that they forget the pill or split the condom.

Intrauterine devices (IUDs) placed at the neck of the womb allow for spontaneity; the new hormonal versions offer even greater reliability. All these methods are reversible given time; the question is whether she wants to ingest hormones – which do guard against some diseases, even if they may make others more likely. If she suffers side effects, she should consult her health professional; a different prescription is often the answer.

Diaphragms and caps offer less efficacy, but also fewer hormones. Some women find that capping themselves before sex is off-putting; some get resistance from partners (though if it’s the only method she can use, don’t make a song and dance about it; that won’t change anything and will make her apprehensive). Either diaphragm or cap can also, handily, hold back menstrual blood if you want intercourse during her period.

The condom, male and female, has the overwhelming selling point of being the only method that offers true safe-sex protection. Hence ignore its reputation as being the “starter” contraceptive and take full advantage; in any but established (and tested) relationships, you are best to use them even if already using hormonal methods. The manipulation involved in letting the woman put a condom on her man excites some people – for a real party trick she can position it with finger and thumb, then roll it down with her tongue. Some makes of knobbed or otherwise-decorated male condoms sold to vary vaginal sensation are unreliable; check the packet for quality-tested logos. They can also slow down some over-quick ejaculators. For guidelines on use, *see* [safe sex](#).

Vasectomy and sterilization are the once-and-for-all contraceptive methods of choice. The male version blocks the tubes down which the sperm travel from the testes, the female version blocks the tubes through which the sperm travel to meet the egg. His operation is done under local anesthetic, hers is a much more major procedure; with both there is a slight time delay before real protection kicks in and neither guarantees any safety when it comes to infections. Plus, you can’t easily change your mind, so regard both options as irreversible, and if you are hesitating about the decision, don’t do it. However, it’s now possible to store sperm or eggs for use at a later date should circumstances change.

If religious beliefs dictate the rhythm method (*coitus reservatus* or “Vatican roulette”), use it carefully and accurately for any serious chance of reliability. The same, only more so, applies to withdrawal (*coitus interruptus*); by the time he is ready to climax fully, he will already have oozed more than enough sperm to make her pregnant a few thousand times over. Regard with equal terror other mythical measures: sex during her period, douching, sneezing, urinating afterwards, and doing it standing up.

If she is unhappily pregnant, seek medical advice immediately; whether or not there is a decision to be made, it’s best to have expert support early on. In many countries, abortion is now medically a less traumatic procedure than it was, but that doesn’t necessarily make it less emotionally traumatic; get support both before and after in order to preempt any emotional kickbacks. That doesn’t just mean for her; he may be grieving too.

In most situations there is no reason not to use contraception, so if you aren’t, it’s likely to be because of what you are feeling rather than what you are doing. This is not a scolding, but an invitation to consider that if one or both of you keep making a “mistake”, it’s not really a mistake. You want to have a baby – for someone to love, for someone to love you, to keep up with your friends, to keep hold of your partner. There is nothing bad about any of these motives, but being aware of them will mean it’s much more likely that you will make the life choices you really want to make.

his erection

A huge empowerment for him and a huge validation for her. She should always feel complimented, even when time and place don't allow for a follow-through; the fact that the event is outside his control adds authenticity. Manhood is symbolized by it, desire measured by it; it is so powerful – and subliminally threatening – that illustrating it is often forbidden.

Functionally, it's also fascinating. The inflow of blood turning soft tissue hard, and downwards into upwards, happens to babies in the womb and continues to happen spontaneously, barring illness, until the end of life itself; the angle, however, shifts from an average of 10 degrees upwards from horizontal at age 20, to 25 degrees downwards at age 70. But don't panic; there is no failure involved if it doesn't happen “no hands.” Equally, a spontaneous nighttime or first-thing-in-the-morning erection is no sign of dissatisfaction or infidelity, but rather automatic brain activity that has been disturbed by an alarm clock. The best thing is to use it there and then.

An erection you can't get rid of is known as priapism, after Priapus, the Roman garden god with a large, stiff, wooden penis. This is rare, but if you have an erection for more than four hours and it isn't because of erection-inducing medication, it's a medical emergency.

Between lovers, an erect penis is a third presence; both gaze and touch are irresistibly drawn to it – it demands to be accommodated with every movement, whether during intercourse or not. This is as it should be; erection is always a minor miracle.

performance

Let's be clear. The conventional male fantasy of being ready to perform anytime, anywhere is totally unrealistic. Only the insensitive are all-time machines like a stud bull, and stud bulls too have their off days. If it happens suddenly, take time, don't panic, sleep; he will probably wake horny. If not, the first line of attack is probably more stimulation – deep positions such as [matrimonial](#), [rear entry à la paresseuse](#), or help from her by hand and mouth.

If the problem is regular or persistent, the causes are 70 percent likely to be physical – high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, drinking, obesity. Unless it brings illness, age has absolutely nothing to do with this; belief that one must run out of steam has ([see age](#)). If problems occur after a lifetime without problems, that calls for medical review rather than resignation. If that review throws up a cause, the prognosis these days is likely to be overwhelmingly optimistic. The “little blue pill” and its cohorts have transformed treatment; where they don't work, the older approaches of suction, pellets, injections, implants, and hormone therapies probably will. But don't bypass the checkup; performance issues are often an advance marker for illness that needs diagnosis and treatment. (For which reason, don't simply order pills on the Internet without a physician's say-so.)

If he is regularly getting an erection by masturbation, in sleep or on waking, or if the checkup has ruled out medical causes, the problem is not with the hydraulics but the mind. Mind problem number one is turning oneself off by apprehension about sexual performance. This can begin because of alcohol, nerves, high expectations, or low self-esteem, but develop into a nervous habit. Mind problem number two is trying to perform against a specific life stress such as overwork or depression, or a specific turnoff such as wrong situation, wrong vibrations. Note to her: if you are blaming it on your failure to attract or his failure to be faithful, you are usually wrong, and making the problem worse by emotionally loading it.

If such mind problems are recalcitrant long term or causing relationship stresses, they will benefit from professional help ([see resources](#)). But in the early stages, many respond to simple, at-home use of loving-kindness and a complete removal of internal and external pressure; no ramping-up of efforts or introduction of tricks and sex toys, all of which will just make him feel he is being asked to deliver and so make things worse. Touch, kisses, a building of affection, and an implicit acceptance on both sides that the relationship is strong enough to survive can, on the other hand, work wonders.

If they don't work wonders, move to a firm resolve not to have intercourse for perhaps a month to ensure that all pressure is taken off and he has time to get his confidence back. During this suspension of more direct activities, anything goes so long as it shifts emphasis onto enjoyment: play, massage, touch, hand work, mouth work, with him stimulating himself, directing her – but stopping as soon as he feels any nervousness creep in or any potential erection soften. As firmness becomes more reliable, still don't rush to intercourse but wait a few more sessions until he is sure and a

few more again until he goes for thrusting intercourse of the sort that demands rock-hard solidity. A surprising number of performance issues can be solved by this kind of loving understanding and the repetition of the mantra “Let’s just play.”

penetration



penetration

the most powerful, most unifying sexual act

Love, closeness, abandoning oneself to one's partner, surrendering (for him), embracing (for her). Reaction to penetration is a summary of who you are individually and in relation to each other. Because of all that, it's the most powerful, most unifying sexual act.

And hence, it always needs approaching with respect on both sides and only when there is full arousal on hers. A courteous lover will pause as he enters, to honor the connection; she, in response, can bear down slightly to welcome him in. Go slow and gentle on the first in-stroke to gauge how much she can take; this will vary according to her mood and often the time of the month. Pulling back slightly, then pushing in a fraction deeper, but still slowly, anchors the connection.

There will be occasions when – for lack of time or her need to be taken brusquely – you don't do any of the above, but thrust in fast and furious. Given happy consent, that's fine too. He may feel more, and there is a unique sensation for her around drier entry – a balance between pain and pleasure – which, if she is emotionally relaxed, can be memorable.

Pain on its own is a different issue. For either him or her, discomfort on penetration can indicate infection or structural problems, and for her, pelvic inflammatory disease, hormonal imbalance, or endometriosis. If the trouble occurs suddenly, and after sufficient arousal and lubrication, see a doctor urgently. This doesn't apply to the sort of pain that happens after a marathon sex session or following a long period of abstinence, when eagerness and sheer wear and tear kick in; this is simply your body's way of telling you to slow down a little.

A stage on from this – vaginismus – means that she closes to the point of blocking penetration entirely. This is not unusual – some figures suggest 20 percent of women suffer – and is not something to be taken lightly. Don't attempt treatment by persuasion or seduction, or an exhortation to "Grit your teeth"; professional support is called for to explore physical and emotional issues, present and often past (*see [resources](#)*).

After the first successful penetration, each withdrawal and reentry – whether to change position, or simply to take time between orgasms – will give a slightly different set of sensations depending on her varying lubrication or his varying firmness. The early Arabic sex manual *The Perfumed Garden* lists six distinct ways of penetrating. Long-term partners will probably develop many more.

choreography

Once joined in whatever position, what remains to be choreographed are depth, speed, and pattern. And though it may seem as if whoever is on top sets the agenda, what follows, in fact, will be a subtle communication, a negotiation between each other's lists of needs and desires. Pulling closer, pulling away, moving back, hesitating, urging on – all these will be signaled consciously with touches and murmurs, unconsciously by shifts of breathing and heart rate.

How to decide what is appropriate and when? The myth is that deepest penetration causes strongest sensation; in reality, it's just one good option – shallow serves to extend intercourse and in any case should always be used initially to respect as-yet-not-fully-aroused vaginal tissue. As to speed, fast may mean a quick ending, while slow can keep both hovering on the edge of orgasm for hours.

Patterns of varying strokes create varying sensations. The Chinese used complicated mixtures of deep and shallow, often in magical numbers – five deep, eight shallow, or such; he could use that basic pattern repeated twice slowly, then twice at a medium speed, then twice fast, reverting to slow again. Counting the patterns can help him to control his orgasm, though the inconsistency may actively interfere with her arousal. If she prefers unpredictability, however, this will play well for her; he should also pause occasionally to keep her in anticipation (see [holding back](#)).

trigger points

There is much controversy about whether key trigger points – the G-, A-, and U-spot – exist. All that needs to be said is that it's worth exploring. But if she doesn't have them, then it's irrelevant – and anxiety-provoking – to insist that she does or regret that she doesn't, and in any case there are plenty of other ways to please. Here are some signposts.

The G-spot – typically a few inches into her vagina. With fingers, simply reach in and beckon towards her belly button – specially designed vibrators have a curve. For intercourse, you need positions that hit the front vaginal wall: rear entry where she arches her back and widens her legs; front entry where she puts her feet on his chest and arches her pelvis. Go slowly and work around the spot with circular movements; at first she can feel as if she is passing water and may need to relax through it. The result, in some women, may be a spurt of liquid – not urine but female ejaculate.

The A-spot – further into her vagina. Use fingers and vibrator in the same way, but slide in more deeply. For intercourse, positions of choice are rear entry, with her sitting or squatting over him, or front entry with her sitting on the edge of the bed and wrapping her legs around his waist.

The U-spot – the external “spot”, situated on her vulva between the clitoris and the vaginal opening. Slow rhythmic pressure is best – she can take charge here and use his penis to bring herself along. Or kneel on top of him (*see [upper hands](#)*) and use her own finger or a vibrator.

missionary position

Name given by amused Polynesians, who preferred squatting intercourse (*see* [seated positions](#)), to the European [matrimonial](#). Libel on one of the most rewarding sex positions.

matrimonial



matrimonial

wildly tough or very tender, slow or quick, deep or shallow

Every culture has its own fads about best positions, and experiment is essential. If we come back to the good old Adam and Eve missionary position with him on top, astride or between, and her underneath facing – and we do come back to it – that’s because it’s uniquely satisfying. Chiefly, it’s unique in its adaptability to mood; it can be wildly tough or very tender, slow or quick, deep or shallow.

The only drawback is the control issue; in this position she can rarely affect his decisions or make any of her own. He is literally on top, and if she feels underneath in any sense, then she will rightly balk. If so, it needs talking about; if one thing is certain, it’s that there is no true lovemaking without a sense of equality.

Matrimonial is the starting point for nearly every sequence, second only to the side positions, and the most reliable mutual finishing point for orgasm. If he starts in it, he can deepen it by raising her legs; move to the clitoris by putting one leg between hers; roll about or right over, finishing with her on top; kneel, then lie back into the letter X with each partner lying between the other’s legs (see [X position](#)); move into back, side, or standing positions; then come back for the finish. Together with the deeper versions (raise her legs around his waist, or over his shoulders) it is also the ideal quick-orgasm

position for both sexes. The only equally quick position for him is from behind if she is very tight, and the only quicker for her is astride on top. In fact, the chief reason for using the other six hundred or so positions is to delay his final orgasm while multiplying hers. Experimentation will show you which suit you best.

Even excluding the leg-raising variants, this position has won more medals at international expositions than any other. On the other hand, there is no one surefire sex position that suits everyone. He may find it leads too quickly to orgasm, or leaves him feeling too much in charge. She may never come in this position, or only rarely; so try another position, especially if the man is overweight. The matrimonial and all deep or weight-bearing positions are now known to be a bad idea in pregnancy: a few non-pregnant non-responders have had their lives changed by one or two hard pillows placed under the buttocks. There are women who have to be taken sitting, face to face, or from behind, finger to clitoris, or who need to ride. If the man needs her flat in order to finish, he can give her several orgasms in her preferred position first, then turn her. A gentleman may be defined as one who takes his weight on his hands. There are great advantages, anyway, in ending in a position where you can settle comfortably in each other's arms afterwards without exertion.

The tuning adjustments for matrimonials can be highly important – hard enough bed, aforementioned use of pillows if she is slim or built that way. Bed, cushion, and flesh should between them give good padding for her. Tough or tender, how high he rides, with her pinned down (fold her arms gently up behind her with him holding each of her thumbs in one of his hands) or not pinned down, astride her legs (holding them open by putting a foot under each of her insteps) or between them, spreading her with his legs – all of these make subtle differences. If his pubis isn't very hard and she needs a touch more clitoral stimulation, try a leg-between position or add finger contact. She can, for her part, hold his foreskin or penile shaft skin back with her hand (see [foreskin](#)).

variety

Plan your menus. Nobody wants a seven-course meal every time. At least 75 percent of really rewarding sex will be your absolutely straight, bedtime or morning pattern. For longer sessions you need to be rested – weekends, holidays, and special occasions on impulse. If you make up your mind that over the course of time you will try everything and have sex everywhere, the occasions will arise: when you feel one coming on, or know you will have the opportunity, plan together – with this book if you like – but don't expect necessarily to keep to what you outlined. Stick to it sometimes, however, so you don't miss things. Most couples will strike out perhaps a third of our suggestions as not turning them on, and pick up three or four headed “we must try that,” if they haven't already.

Her timing and his may vary, with hers typically demanding a long lead-in time. So start with hand or mouth work for her, move on to vaginal sex, then use mouth work to get a further erection – maybe have a final orgasm by masturbating together. Prolonged spinouts involving make-believe, experiments, and so on often go best with ample time – positions needing a very hard erection go best on waking fresh. Unlike a man, an untired and responsive woman can typically take more than one orgasm, but make the first one the easiest for her, unless her pattern is one overwhelming orgasm only – if so, keep it for last (*see [come again](#)*).

Varying times of day is well worthwhile, but depends on your commitments and how easily you can get some privacy or clear your mind of other things. Try never to put it off if you both want it, except to “save up” for something. Planning and thinking about sex to come is part of love. So is lying together in complete luxury afterwards.

upper hands



upper hands

unique, giving her total freedom to control movement, depth, and her partner

If the matrimonial is the king of postures, the queen is her turn on top. Indian erotology is the only ancient tradition devoid of stupid patriarchal hang-ups about the need for her to be underneath, and unashamed about accepting her fully aggressive role in reciprocal sex. With a woman who has good vaginal muscle control, it can be fantastic for the man, but for her it's unique, giving her total freedom to control movement, depth, and her partner. She can lean forward for breast or mouth kisses, lean back to show herself to him, touch her own clitoris as she moves, delay if she wishes for emphasis – the lot. She can also ride him facing or facing away – what the Chinese reputedly call “wild geese flying on their backs” – or turn from one into the other, once or often.

Riding postures need a stiff erection (or she may bend him painfully with an over-hurried insertion). This is, in fact, one of the few kinds of intercourse in which one or

both can be injured by clumsiness or by slipping (see [X position](#)), so test yourselves gradually; she should take the weight fully on her knees, position herself directly over him, and lower slowly. Once in, she can go facing, backing, kneeling, sitting cross-legged upon him, sideways, or round and round, and make movements in three dimensions and circularly with her hips. She can also lie on him (reversed matrimonial), legs astride or between.

When she has taken her main orgasm, he can either turn her, or she can lie back astride him, head between his feet, without disconnecting, and go on in the X position or the full matrimonial for his orgasm. Since it needs a stiff erection, and some women prefer to start from foreplay laterally or underneath, this makes a good second figure of a series. If she wants to bring him to orgasm this way, they should try it as the first figure, preferably on waking and when he is fresh, with a hard erection.

The round-and-round and cinder-sifting motions of the woman's hips – what the French call the Lyons mail coach (*la diligence de Lyon*) – come easily with practice if she has the right personality.



frontal



frontal

he astride her legs or between them

All the face-to-face positions where one partner has both thighs between those of the other – he astride both of her legs or between them. Includes all the varieties of the [matrimonial](#), plus most of the more complicated, deep facing positions. Gives more depth (usually) but less clitoral pressure than the [flanquettes](#).

To unscramble a complicated posture for purposes of classification, see if partners can move into the classic matrimonial without withdrawing or crossing legs. If so, it's frontal. If not, and they finish face-to-face astride one leg, it's a [flanquette](#); square from behind, [croupade](#); or from behind, astride a leg, [cuissade](#).

This isn't an intellectual classificatory exercise. Postures are to be used in sequence, and one needs to make as few radical shifts, such as climbing over legs or turning a partner over, as possible. This is important in planning sequences, though once you get used to going through 5, 10, or 20 postures at a single session, you will do it automatically: at first, whichever partner leads, they need to envisage all the stages in getting where they are going to avoid clumsiness and breaks, other than natural and

intended ones.

inversion



inversion

with orgasm the buildup of pressure in the veins of the face and neck can produce startling sensations

Taking him or her head-down. He can sit on a chair or a stool and take her astride facing – then she lies back until her head rests on a cushion on the floor. Or she can lie down, raising her hips – he stands between her legs and enters her either from in front or from behind while she rests on her elbows or walks on her hands (the wheelbarrow). Don't even think about this one if she has a bad back. He or she can lie over the edge of the bed, faceup, while the other sits or stands astride. With orgasm the buildup of pressure in the veins of the face and neck can produce startling sensations.

Unless you want a body on your hands, better not try this on a hypertensive executive, but it should be safe enough if you are reasonably fit. It's the way to handle

those idiotic people who try to persuade a lover to boost their orgasm by throttling them – if you meet one of these, never be persuaded to do anything so silly, but teach them this alternative and equally rewarding method. You may save two lives – theirs, and, since most people’s grip tightens in orgasm, their next partner’s, which could otherwise easily be spent in jail for homicide.

Inverted *soixante-neuf* is described elsewhere (see [this page](#)). This makes a good tryout, always works if he can lift her, and will give her an idea of the quality of sensation involved; not everyone likes it.

X position



X position

a winner for prolonged, slow intercourse

A winner for prolonged, slow intercourse. Start with her sitting facing astride him with one or both legs over his, penis fully inserted. She then lies right back – clasping his hands will help – until each partner's head and trunk are horizontal. Slow, coordinated wriggling movements will keep him erect and her close to orgasm for long periods. To switch back to other positions, either of them can sit up without disconnecting. Useful when neither partner can bear weight because of tiredness, illness, or disability. In particular, use as a discreet training position when she is learning to help herself to climax by hand during intercourse and might get embarrassed if he is obviously watching.

flanquette

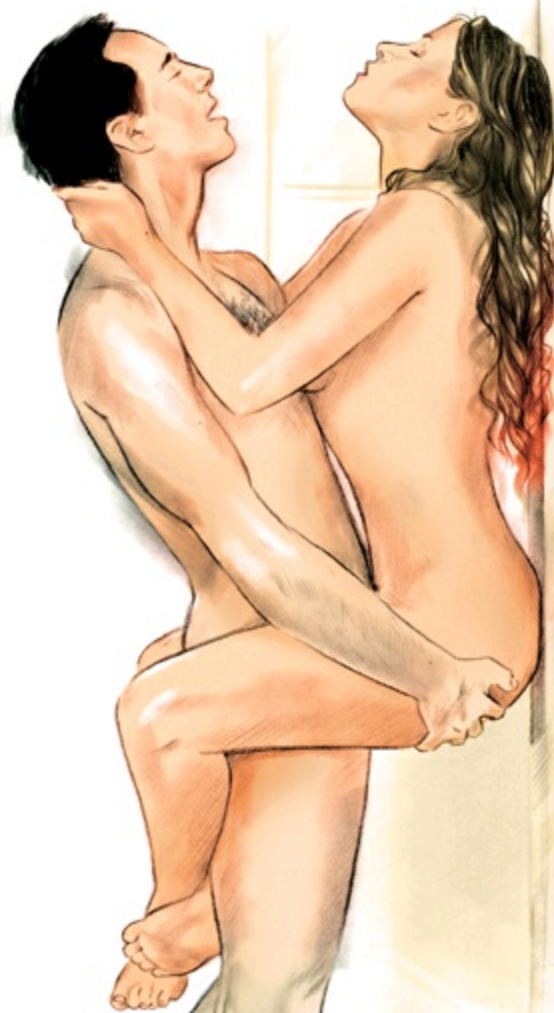


flanquette

extra clitoral pressure from the man's thigh if he presses hard with it

The half-facing group of sexual postures – she lies facing him with one of her legs between his, and consequently one of his legs between hers, the frontal equivalent of the *cuissade*. These positions give extra clitoral pressure from the man's thigh if he presses hard with it. Good for when he needs to slow down, she is sufficiently pregnant that she can't take his weight, or either of you are exhausted. Not good if you want deep penetration. See [illustration](#).

standing positions



*standing positions
designed to spin out the pleasure*

The traditional upright is a quickie, and apt to produce stiff male muscles unless she is tall. Many women need to stand on two thick phone directories, or equivalent. Best undertaken up against a solid object such as a wall or a tree (not a door, whichever way it opens). Alternatively, you can be freestanding, legs apart for stability and arms clasped around each other's buttocks – looking down as you move can be really sensual.

There are two kinds of position – this one, subject to a good match in height, and the

Hindu versions, where he picks her up: these are tremendous if she is light as an Oriya dancing girl, otherwise they need to be executed in water to make her weightless (see [bathing](#)). For a tall woman, try with her arms around his neck, one of her feet on the ground, and the other around his waist or over his elbow. She can then go legs around waist, both legs over his arms, and even both legs around his neck, lying back, if he is strong enough, into a head-down position. Try this over a bed in case he should drop her, but stand on a firm floor, not a mattress. If he is back up to a wall, she can swing herself with one foot. Not good orgasm positions – designed rather to spin out the pleasure. Standing positions from behind need no special comment – she needs to lean over or hold onto something rigid.

If you have real height-discrepancy problems, try the upright positions – carefully – on a flight of stairs. The head-down genital kiss is a winner if he is strong enough to be able to hold her up, and she takes a good leg grip (see [mouth work](#) for her).

rear entry



rear entry

the physical payoff is intense

The other human option – for most mammals it’s the only one. Works admirably standing, lying, kneeling, sitting, or with the woman astride. The lack of face-to-face contact is more than compensated for by extra depth and buttock stimulation, hand access to breasts and clitoris, and the sight of her rear view. For the standing positions, she needs something of the right height to support her; in the head-down kneeling positions, he needs to be careful not to push her face into the mattress. In all of the deep variants, he should avoid going too deep too hard, otherwise he will hit an ovary, which is as painful as hitting a testicle.

A few women are put off by the symbolism – “doing it like animals”, “not being valued if we aren’t face to face” – and if that’s the case, then of course avoid; but the physical payoff is so intense that it’s a good idea to at least attempt it once before

passing.

They could try it first with the man lying on his back and the woman lying faceup on top of him, or kneeling astride facing away, though these approaches don't give the unique depth and total perineal stimulation of the rear kneeling positions.

In the classic version, she kneels on the bed, hands clasped behind her neck, breasts and face down. He kneels behind. She hooks her legs over his and thus pulls him to her – he puts a hand on each of her shoulder blades and presses down. This very deep position is apt to pump her full of air, which escapes later in a disconcerting manner, but is otherwise excellent. He can also hold her breasts or pubis, or, if she likes to be controlled, grasp her wrists behind her. A pile of hard pillows under her middle will help to prevent the position from collapsing if she doesn't like being forcibly held, or she can kneel on the floor with her chest on the bed or a chair seat. The head-down position is best for depth and total apposition – avoid it if it hurts her, if she has a weak back, or if she is pregnant.

Many women like a finger, either his or hers, on the clitoris during intercourse and this is easy to accomplish in all rear positions. It's worth trying in any case, as it totally alters the range of sensation. Grasping the whole pussy in one hand gives a different sensation again and doesn't give the excessive sharpness that comes from strong clitoral stimulation. Alternatively, he can withdraw briefly and give a few clitoral strokes with the glans, guiding it with his hand.

While the deep kneeling position is, or can be, one of the toughest, from behind on your sides is about the gentlest (*à la paresseuse* – the lazy position) and can even be done in sleep – best if she draws her top thigh up a little and sticks her bottom out. This is one position that, for many women, can be managed with very little or even no erection; it can help to cure partial impotence or nervousness on the male side by restoring morale. It's also excellent if you want gentle sex for reasons of pregnancy, illness, or disability.

It's well worth experimenting with the full range of rear positions at least as fully as with the face-to-face series, because there almost certainly will be at least one you will use regularly along with the matrimonial, and its variants, and the woman-astride positions.



rear entry

extra depth and buttock stimulation, hand access to breasts and clitoris, the sight of her rear view

postillionage

The name French erotica gives to anal play – putting a finger, tongue, or sex toy on or in a partner’s anus. Symbolically a huge intimacy – touching or being touched there is the ultimate sign of trust. Physically, the thousands of nerve endings give an intense effect; in addition, for him, the prostate gland is his G-spot equivalent, more or less guaranteeing an orgasm or at least an additional kick to a penis-induced one.

As to safety, HIV and hepatitis are the best known but not the only potential problems – the anus itself bleeds easily and allows in infection from feces; this can be nasty, and she is more at risk. But given that you’ve been tested for STDs, this need not be a life or death issue; wash before and after with a soapy finger, then use especially strong condoms on body parts and sex toys, with gloves for hand work and latex dams for mouth work. Never put anything that’s already been “there” into mouth or vagina ([see safe sex](#)).

To start, place the receiver on their back or – for the more vulnerable – sitting up with open legs. Lubricate, lubricate, and lubricate again; the anus doesn’t do it naturally ([see lubrication](#)). Use a fingertip or two at the entrance, then let the receiver push back rather than you pushing in; once inside, don’t poke but wait for the sphincter to relax, then trace gentle circles. For his prostate, reach back and up to a small indentation about two inches in, then stroke or press; your other hand wraps around his shaft and pushes it towards his stomach for added sensation.

Accompany all this with good finger and tongue work on penis, clitoris, vagina. Once you both know what you are doing and are able to hit the spot reliably, get the other to the point of orgasm first by the usual methods, then slide a finger in at the last moment as you finish them off. When withdrawing, come out gradually or let the receiver pull away; otherwise you risk causing pain and tearing.

All of the above can be done equally well with a condom-covered butt plug or anal dildo. Get dedicated ones with a fluted base; few things are more embarrassing than having to seek emergency treatment for losing something somewhere that you can’t retrieve. One variation is anal beads to be inserted and pulled out during climax; traditionally she used her pearl necklace, though the specially made sex-shop versions are safer.

Of all sexual variations, this and what follows ([see anal intercourse, opposite](#)) are likely to be the ones that need most emotional support. Go slowly. Encourage. Caress. Tell that that they are in control. If panic sets in, call a halt – there are plenty of other nice games.

anal intercourse

Nowadays one of the last taboos, but hasn't always been so; before reliable contraception, a popular virginity preserver or protection technique and in the original version of this book introduced as "something which nearly every couple tries once." Today this might not be as accurate: many individuals have prejudices and many cultures have laws, the acceptance of homosexuality has helped while the HIV epidemic has hindered. Even so, some surveys suggest that nearly half of all couples have tried it.

Traditionally it's him penetrating her. Many women like it, many others find it hurts and simply won't; insisting isn't acceptable and neither is sleight of hand. She says "Please don't simply go for it and, when we flinch, pretend you got the wrong hole. Say so and let's negotiate." (The same goes for if she wants to try it on him). Both he and she should "receive" at least once to learn how it feels and how carefully to go. Liking to be on the receiving end, despite male fears to the contrary, does not mean that he is gay.

From both sides, the start is the same as for *postillionage*, with lots of lubrication – and preferably a standard orgasm first, to relax tense or nervous muscles. Of course, use condoms – the ones made specially for anal use, which are thicker and hence safer than their standard equivalents; *see postillionage* (opposite) for further safety notes.

The classic position for anal intercourse is with the receiver on their knees, posterior raised and buttocks spread. But she in particular may feel this one is just too similar to the antics in the monkey cage; if so she can lie back with her knees up to her chest, or squat and lower herself down.

He should never thrust straight in – the anus curves and he'll simply slam into her rectal wall. Instead, he should angle slightly, aiming for her belly button. It'll help her to bear down, to breathe deeply, to relax. It typically hurts more at the start but any sharp or lasting discomfort should call an instant halt to the proceedings. The key to pleasure rather than pain is for her to be in control, so give her a safe word (*see hazards*).

Three things to expect. One: expect full penetration to take several sessions as the receiver accommodates both physically and emotionally. Two: if he's the one penetrating, expect a quick climax – the anus, unlike the vagina, stays tight when penetrated. Three: expect the receiver to get much less pleasure out of it than the giver – feeling nothing at all or being lucky simply to experience fullness. The main kick is likely to be the fact of opening to a partner in a unique and rather "forbidden" way.

croupade



croupade

he takes her squarely from behind

Any position in which he takes her squarely from behind; that is, all rear-entry positions except those where she has one leg between his or is half-turned on her side (see *cuissade*).

cuissade



cuissade

she lies half-turned to let him in

The half-rear entry positions, where she turns her back to him and he enters with one of her legs between his and the other more or less drawn up: in some versions, she lies half-turned on her side to let him in, still facing away (see [croupade](#)).

kneeling positions



kneeling positions for deep penetration

Any intercourse position where one kneels and the other lies back. Hers is largely Hobson's choice, kneeling astride him on top, with her only decision being between facing towards or away. He has more options: her lying flat on the bed, feet on floor; flat on floor with legs up and feet either side of his thighs; feet on his chest; feet around his waist; feet over his shoulders and legs crossed to tighten her vagina. He can also choose whether to kneel up or kneel back on his heels; both demand a soft surface under hard knee bones, and the latter has a limited time span due to cramp – throw down a pillow and aim for five minutes maximum. You can then start to vary where her feet go. Advocates recommend this for when one wants deep penetration and G-spot stimulation (see [trigger points](#)).

seated positions

The “pre-missionary” position – the one quite a few cultures favored before they got invaded and forced to do it man-on-top. She sits on the ground with her legs spread, he squats or kneels between them, penetrates, then pulls her towards him; variations include her lying all the way back, her sitting on his lap, or both leaning away with their weight on their hands. Particularly good where one or other partner has a disability that makes prone postures or weight-bearing difficult. The Polynesians preferred this because it makes her orgasm easier – having four hands free helps. The Ghanaian Tallensi preferred it because if the woman wanted out, she could push the man over with a kick – which has a certain appeal. The Chinese reputedly called it “wailing monkey clasping a tree.”

If involving furniture – chair, table, car hood – make sure she can lean back against something while she wraps her legs around his waist. Vice versa, he sits on a chair and she straddles; some sex manuals suggest she then puts both ankles on his shoulders, but you would probably need to have circus training for that.

turning positions



turning positions

the challenge is to keep the connection

Any position where one or both partners switch viewpoint, or begin on top and end up underneath; the *Kama Sutra* warns these are only mastered with practice. Classics are **matrimonial**, with him then turning to face her feet, or **upper hands**, with her then turning to present her buttocks. The challenge is to keep the connection. If simply reversing superiority, she can put her legs around his waist or intertwine both sets of calves. If one or the other is turning to face in another direction, go for deep penetration followed by careful synchronicity. To be honest, it's usually easier to withdraw, rearrange, and then reinsert.



Viennese oyster

A woman who can cross her feet behind her head, lying on her back, of course. When she has done so, he holds her tightly around each instep with his full hand and squeezes, lying on her full-length. Don't try to put an unsupple partner into this position – it can't be achieved by brute force. You can get a very similar sensation – unique rocking pelvic movement – with less expertise if she crosses her ankles on her tummy, knees to shoulders, and he lies on her crossed ankles with his full weight. Why “Viennese” we don't know. Tolerable for short periods only and expect only shallow penetration. Worth trying, nevertheless.

sex for pregnancy

Those who know report that sex in the context of baby-making is a very different experience. Realizing that what you are doing aims to create a human life can focus the mind and add an extra dimension of gravitas to the situation, but doesn't mean that the passion should be sidelined.

Which is why it's best to avoid getting hooked on the "how." Yes, it makes sense not to defy gravity by putting her on top or standing, and not to do something obviously stupid like douching. But there is no actual research about which positions work best, while the old wives' tale about the pillow under the buttocks has been actively disproved. All that's certain is that deep positions help – but which is the deepest for any one couple depends how their bits fit, and after that it's a matter for experimentation.

So forget the mechanics. Get health checks for both, get as fit as possible, lose the cigarettes and the alcohol. Then relax. Ninety out of every hundred couples trying to get pregnant do so within two years (for those who don't, see [resources](#), for help), and enjoyable lovemaking will shorten that period more than stressed, obsessive copulation where he feels like a sperm bank and she like a brood mare. If ever there is an argument for rerepeating the joy of sex, it's here.

Once pregnant, the temptation may be to back off lovemaking – he for fear of damaging her or the baby, she because she feels too nauseous to do anything but curl up and whimper. The second will resolve itself. The first – given a medical all clear – can be ignored; all kinds of orgasm are a good idea, bringing extra blood and hence nourishment to the womb and fetus.

As regards intercourse, during the first trimester she may prefer to go on top to control the depth and avoid triggering heartburn or indigestion. During the second trimester, lying on her back may cease to be a good idea, so use side or seated positions. In the last weeks, when backache can be a problem, she may want to be on all fours, taken from behind or *flanquette*. Sex toys are fine so long as they are clean and not used forcibly – do with them anything one would do with loving hands, tongue, or penis. Anal sex should be avoided or taken with even more care and attention than usual to avoid tearing and subsequent infection.

When it comes to the birth process, the thought of including sex may raise eyebrows, but some midwives suggest intercourse to bring on labor; once that starts, the mother-to-be can also masturbate to climax as a pain reliever. There is surely a satisfying symmetry to including the pleasure that began conception within the end result.

In the aftermath of the birth, sex may be the last thing on one's mind. Fatigue, post-labor damage, hormone imbalance – and the whole bag of responsibility for a new small person – may mean that she identifies with the new mother who, when asked by the midwife about sexual activity, exclaimed, "You don't think I'm ever going to do that again!" However, after the medical thumbs-up, there is a great deal to be said for having sex even if one doesn't feel like it. It's easy to get out of the habit and, through embarrassment, postpone the day for months or years. Consider going ahead anyway,

just to know it's possible. Don't forget to check out contraception – it's a myth that breast-feeding automatically ensures protection.

Be very aware of her physical – and emotional – vulnerability. To offset, try with her on top or side by side so that she is comfortable and lubricate generously. She should tighten her buttocks to protect as he slides in – he should remain steady and let her set the pace to feel in control. If she is in pain, stop; otherwise do as much as is feasible, then celebrate. Once the habit is reestablished, trust us, it will get easier and more comfortable with time.

plateau phase

If arousal is the upwards climb from not even being aware of desire to the peak of orgasm, this is the point just short of the peak when it's good to stop, look around, and be overwhelmed by the view.

It was sexologists William Masters and Virginia Johnson who coined the term "plateau phase" for the final intense stage of arousal. Climax hasn't occurred, but it's inevitable; that knowledge in itself is part of what pushes him in particular beyond the point of no return; she, meanwhile, needs to suspend the thinking at this point in order to topple.

It is possible to prolong and deepen the moment. This is not about spinning out the intercourse part; it's way too late for that. But just at the point before inevitability kicks in, try stopping all movement, even suspending breath, concentrating on the sensations completely; this is unlikely to play the first time you try it, but with practice, perhaps even alone before together, it's entirely achievable. And once you have the experience, it's impossible to forget how completely.

The alternative is to forego your plateau in the cause of the other. Focusing all attention on your partner, assuming all responsibility, doing what works for them even if it doesn't work for you; leaving them free to climax for themselves alone. The experience of having "everything around you give you its utter attention, think only of you, care only for you" is unforgettable and transformational. For which reason every lover ought to receive it and give it at regular intervals.

his orgasm

May seem a direct and inevitable process; the reality is more complex. Like her, he needs to feel safe; unlike her, if he doesn't, he can't even make a start – for him, anorgasmia kicks in at erection stage. Once started, his needs are more specific: stimulation direct to the penis, indirect to the prostate (*see [postillionage](#)*). Some can come through scrotum or nipple stimulation alone, but his orgasmic reliability is largely dependent on target.

In terms of what is needed as opposed to where, he will already have a clear idea, honed through years of self-teaching, so can easily – given opportunity and permission – offer her lessons. The only challenge thereafter will be that if his preferred route is well trodden, the temptation for both will be never to vary from that; a truly inspired partner will occasionally override the routine and skillfully take him down a different road.

The event itself is twofold – seminal fluid gathering, then ejaculated – with the first two or three contractions stronger followed by three or four weaker ones; some men then feel an aftershock. During intercourse he may automatically shift his movements to suit each phase; working solo, she can learn to choreograph her response according to what emphasis he needs.

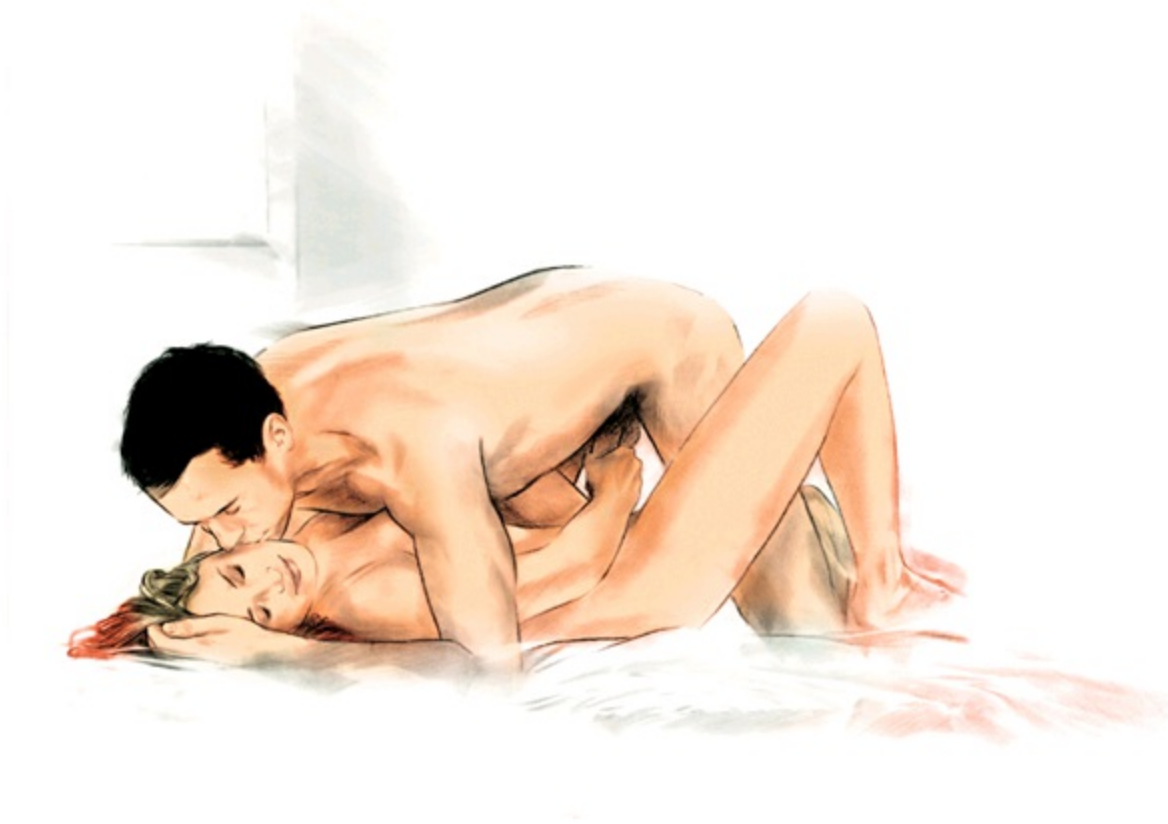
For a stronger, more intense climax, he can train with Kegel exercises (*see [pompoir](#)*) or experiment with approaching and then withdrawing from climax (*see [holding back](#)*) to increase blood flow into the penis. The opposite, trying to avoid ejaculation (dry orgasm), is now thought to be a bad idea and to cause medical problems.

His climax usually comes with its own evidential proof, but men have been known to fake to avoid disappointing or disrespecting a partner. Just as bad an idea – and for the same reasons – as her equivalent; it denies both the chance to find out what's actually needed. If he is doing it, he should simply stop; if she suspects he is doing it, she should gently challenge.

For over-quick orgasm, *see [hair-trigger trouble](#)*. Over-slow or not-at-all orgasm or ejaculation is rarer and usually due to disease or medication (if only recent), or emotional blocks (if long term). The answer to the first issue is a medical checkup, to the second, to take the pressure off any attempt to orgasm; much as with any orgasmic blocks she may have, he needs safety and sensuousness rather than expectation and pressure.

She can sometimes underestimate how compelling his climax is and how lost in sensation he can get – she feels sidelined. He can sometimes underestimate how withdrawn from her he can seem in the throes and hence how much she will need connection afterwards. It may help both to realize that male orgasm triggers the same brain areas as those triggered by heroin use; for him, the experience is literally an all-engrossing high.

hair-trigger trouble



hair-trigger trouble

either he or she can simply squeeze the penis, two fingers below the head

Alias premature ejaculation. Forget the so-called statistics on how long an average man can keep going and how long an average woman wants him to – any ejaculation that occurs before you are both ready is premature.

At the first session with a much-desired partner, 50 percent of men either ejaculate too quickly or fail to get an erection; ensure a whole night so you can try for a comeback, but don't try too hard. If you go to sleep, he will probably wake with a huge erection. If it happens consistently with a regular partner, it may be medical; prostate infections, low serotonin levels, and certain medications have been implicated. He should see his doctor.

By far the most likely cause is what's happening mentally. While over-eagerness can be delightful on occasion, it can mean an absence of enough sex to reach optimal performance. One can ward this off solo by masturbating frequently, but in the presence of all the stimuli from a real woman – particularly a much-desired partner – this can still break down. Once anxiety kicks in, it can worsen and rule out quality sex. Time to act.

Not, however, with sex-shop creams that claim to hold you back – they are simply anesthetic and take away not only his pleasure but hers too. More appealing are active

strategies. He may find it helps to relax and push out – hair-trigger trouble can be caused by anal tension – while either he or she can simply squeeze the penis, thumb and two fingers below the head, to soften the stiffest of erections. A lot can be done by using a side-by-side position so that he can't thrust much or deeply.

But these are short-term solutions. Long term, he needs to relearn his response – much premature climax is caused by his brain simply blocking awareness of the signals and so not noticing that he is at the point of no return; the answer is to be more aware rather than more controlled. He should start by masturbating alone, paying close attention to the signals and stopping as soon as he senses even the first sign of approaching orgasm, letting his erection subside, then going again. Several sessions of this should result in a good sense of what to notice and hence how – and, vitally, when – to pull back, before proceeding to more of the same but with her alongside. Repeat while embracing, then with her touching, then licking. When he can stay aware and relaxed up to that point, he can try penetration, holding still inside her for timed minute intervals. The aim always is not to hold back, but rather to build his experience and confidence.

Relationship problems may be the root cause. If he is feeling angry or hurt, the temptation may be to climax and be done without even considering her – in which case, all the training in the world won't get a result. They need to talk – and probably get professional support (see [resources](#)).

saxonus

Coitus saxonus – pressing firmly on the male urethra near the root of the penis to slow down ejaculation during orgasm. No use as a contraceptive, since sperm is around long before he ejaculates – but some women do have the knack, when giving hand work, of stopping and restarting ejaculation by urethral pressure so as to spin out the male peak.

This is best done by pressing on the shaft near the root with two or three fingers, but you need to press hard (don't bruise). The idea is to allow ejaculation to occur piecemeal. If you stop it altogether, however, he will eventually ejaculate into the bladder, which is not to be recommended. Simply slowing down ejaculation is probably harmless, but it's difficult and won't work on everyone. Women who have this technique in their repertoire say it's appreciated, but that may depend on their partner. You might as well stop just short of ejaculation, then restart the whole business a few minutes later.

pompoir



pompoir

the most sought-after feminine response of all

The most sought-after feminine response of all.

“She must ... close and constrict the Yoni until it holds the Lingam as with a finger, opening and shutting at her pleasure, and finally acting as the hand of the Gopala-girl who milks the cow ... This can be learned ... by throwing her will into the part affected, even as men endeavor to sharpen their hearing ... Her husband will then value her above all women, nor would he exchange her for the most beautiful queen in the Three Worlds ...” Thus Richard Burton in his translation of the *Anaga Ranga*.

This superlative knack can be learned; traditionally, women in South India were taught it. The nearest equivalent nowadays are Kegel exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. Prescribed for urinary leaks, when done well they also develop a rippling movement in the vagina and a stronger experience of orgasm for her. She can then get to a point where she is able to draw him in and up to her G-spot (see [trigger points](#)), or even act as a penis ring to keep him erect after his first orgasm.

In this regard, worth perfecting. She should find the muscles that come into play when she is about to urinate, squeeze, then relax; try around two fingers to learn what it should feel like. Aim for fifty times, twice a day. Some sex-toy stores sell penis-shaped resistors to create more effective toning, though practicing with penetration by the real thing is a much better idea. He too should practice the urine-flow trick to tone and strengthen orgasm; he will feel it as a pulling up just behind his testicles. Breathe out and contract the muscle, breathe in, and release. Again, repeat multiples, twice a day.

her orgasm

Unlike his, not essential for the continuation of the species. Unlike his also, often not reliable. The basic event, however, is the same: blood flowing in, a rise in tension, contractions, all with heightened breathing, heart rate, blood pressure. Given descriptions of orgasm by both men and women, expert observers couldn't identify which gender was speaking. The difference, if any, is likely to come in the symbolism. For some women the trust involved is deeply linked with relationship; not only is orgasm a sign of involvement, it creates it – hence she may be, perhaps rightly, reluctant to come with a partner she is not ready to love.

Argument rages still about the difference between the different types: “clitoral,” “vaginal,” “vulval,” “uterine,” “cervical,” “blended,” “G-spot.” We don't think it matters where it comes from so long as it comes. We do think it matters to dispel the myth that there is one right way (see [clitoral pleasure](#)). To real lovers, the only question is what works for each individual her, with each individual him, in the moment.

She needs to be relaxed and unworried: neuroscientist Gert Holstege's work suggests that the fear centers of the female brain disconnect as she climaxes – and if they don't, she can't. This, as well as simple learning, is why women climax more within long-term relationships than in casual sex. New lovers may find it helps to put her in charge, dictating the moves; as trust builds, she can teach him what works and hand over control slowly.

The fact is that for most women – as for many men – hand or tongue work is the speediest route to climax. He shouldn't feel threatened by that fact – speed is much less important than quality – but take advantage of it. Watching her bring herself to her first orgasm, perhaps by vibrator, is not only arousing for him but will bring her along physically and relax her mentally. He can then follow her lead to provide her second by hand or tongue, before moving them both to intercourse (see [bridge](#)).

Position may be as vital to her orgasm as it is to his; experiment. Crucial will be the angle of her pelvis – some women need to arch, pushing the genitals down and away, some to tilt upwards. Given the right physiology in each partner, the [CAT](#) combines penetration and clitoral pressure; alternatively, slide a hand (or a wand vibrator) down (see [clitoral pleasure](#)) – easiest in rear entry or her-on-top positions.

A word about female ejaculation. If it happens spontaneously, there is no need to panic or, as one man did, sue for divorce because he thought his wife was urinating on him. If you want it to happen deliberately, the key is gentle yet persistent stimulation of the G-spot (see [trigger points](#)). If it doesn't happen, despite trying, her climax won't be any less pleasurable.

Two words to her about faking. Please don't. It's not only hard to do – few women can fake vaginal contractions and none can produce to order the telltale sex flush on breasts and neck – but it also sets up, in a single instant, a future of self-denial within you and deceit within your relationship. The more you fake, the harder it is to unfake – and the harder it becomes to ask for what you need in order not to have to fake in the

first place. In a loving relationship, it should be possible to have an orgasm only every once in a while and still be loved.

But if once in a while is less than you want, it should also be entirely possible to remedy the situation. If she can orgasm perfectly well on her own, the clear indication is that it's about technique; this then becomes a simple matter of your both embracing the idea that what she needs in order to climax may not always be what he thinks she needs. Tell him – more important, show him.

If there is still difficulty, it's worthwhile seeing a health professional – some medical conditions and medications interfere with natural response. It may also be a good idea to consult a mental-health professional – some women's upbringing or experience of sexual trauma leave them on such full defense alert around sexual issues that climax is almost impossible (*see [resources](#)*). It's always worthwhile looking at what's happening in your relationship; why should she climax with someone she dislikes, even if that dislike is trivial and temporary?

Once again, it can't be stressed enough – build a wide repertoire; the effective way may not be the same from day to day or even moment to moment. The old woman in the early Arabic sex manual *The Perfumed Garden*, whose advice to the unfulfilled couple was to try as many different methods as possible, was right five hundred years ago and is still right today.

bridge

A way to “bridge” the gap between climax without penetration and climax with it. Its origins are in sex therapy, but it has now proved adaptable for domestic use. In brief, she does whatever works for her, bringing penetration into the act more and more; over time, the two get linked and in the end the link may prove strong enough that the gap disappears.

Start face-to-face, both lying on your side or with her on top – the key is that she has room to reach down. She brings herself along by hand at her own pace, while he provides whatever additional extras she needs; his hand or her other hand keeps him erect, and at climax she switches to using his erect penis to rub her U-spot (see [trigger points](#)). When this is doable reliably – over a dozen sessions is remarkable progress – she starts easing down onto the penis, and climaxing with it inside, he thrusting gently if her concentration allows. The final step is for her to switch at the last moment so that his thrusts take her over the edge. Practice makes perfect and success breeds success simply through breeding confidence.

However, be warned, this technique demands expenditure on time and patience on both sides; don't get too serious about it and don't fret if it doesn't work for you. In this, perhaps as in no other game, never dance with a man you can't laugh with.

CAT



CAT

the ultimate wish fulfillment of a woman climaxing to order

This has nothing to do with felines, but is an acronym for Coital Alignment Technique, one of the few ways that both partners' glans can be stimulated at the same time by penetration alone. Highly supportive to the possibility of intercourse orgasms on both sides. Probably developed by therapist Edward Eichel and team – though amusingly, when it became fashionable, a team of journalists from one of the world's foremost women's magazines allegedly claimed the credit.

He climbs on top, as in the matrimonial, but with his full weight on her; she maneuvers so that his pubic bone hits her clitoris, and as he thrusts, she tilts so that her clitoris is pulled down and then up. If that doesn't play, hand her the control. Begin with her on top (*see [upper hands](#)*), him lying still; she leans forward and experiments until she finds a position and movement that nudges her clitoris in the way she needs. Once found, he can join in by thrusting and, once perfected, they can roll over and into matrimonial; side-to-side can work too, but getting any other position to work is more or less impossible. Keep a regular yet gentle rocking rhythm.

She has to know what she wants and ask for it, even if it disrupts his pattern, so not good for men who insist there is one "right way." But if he can relax and let her take over, they may get the ultimate wish fulfillment of a woman climaxing to order.

venus butterfly

Sexual pièce de résistance, originally fictional. It was invented for a plot line in a 1986 episode of *L.A. Law* as a miraculous technique to bring a woman to continuous extended orgasm, but later became an urban myth that every man wanted to know. Various specified; the common thread is exceedingly skillful three-way stimulation the clitoris, vagina, and anus. One way might be using splayed hands with his thumb touching her clitoris, first two fingers in vagina, remaining fingers on anus; gentle opening and closing of his hands gives the “butterfly” effect. Or mouth work on her clitoris, with one or two fingers “beckoning” her G-spot (see [trigger points](#)), while the other hand probes her rectum. Some commentators – including the authors of an entire book on the subject–say it works. Others say it’s physically impossible. Best to do several trial runs before a serious performance.

birdsong at morning



birdsong at morning

in mutual, let-go intercourse, make as much noise as you like

What your partner says in orgasm should never be quoted at them – it can be played back when you are both in a suitable mood, but only then. It's the time when people are spiritually most naked.

There is a striking consistency, over ages and continents, in what we say in orgasm. Japanese, Indian, French, and English all babble about dying (“Some of them,” said sixteenth-century French historian Abbé Brantôme, “yell out ‘I’m dying,’ but I think they enjoy that sort of death.”), about Mother (they often call for her at the crucial moment), and about religion, even if they are atheists. This is natural – orgasm is the most spiritual moment of our lives, of which all other mystical kicks are a mere translation. Men are apt to growl like bears, or utter aggressive monosyllables like “In, in, in!” The wife of the Leopard in the novel of the same name used to yell out “Gesumaria!” and there is an infinite variety of sounds short of speech.

Why these cries are so charming, it's hard to say. The Indians classified them, compared them to bird cries, and warned how easily parrots and mynahs pick them up,

with bad social vibrations when they repeat the lesson – hence no parrots in the love chamber. It's important to learn to read them while enjoying the music, and particularly to know when "Stop" means stop and when it means "For God's sake, go on." This is an individual language and you need to be a sensitive field observer to learn its meaning.

Some of the "words" are common – a gasp when a touch registers right, a shuddering out-breath when you follow through. Some people talk continuously in a sort of baby whisper, or repeat four-letter words of the most unlikely kind – some you can hear several blocks away, while others still are dead silent or laugh or sob disconcertingly. Of the really noisy performers, some like to be allowed to yell, while others like to be gagged, or stuff their hair in their mouths in the style of a Japanese print (traditional Japanese houses have paper partitions). Men can be equally noisy in the run-up to orgasm, but are not usually so continuously vocal.

A naturally silent partner doesn't mean a lack of pleasure; unsurprisingly, some people still find it hard to do what – as children – they were told not to do. If you want noise, say so early on; she in particular may feel bestial when moaning or grunting, and it will help to give permission. Equally, say so if some expressions are a turnoff; there are plenty of other options (*see words*).

The important point is this: in mutual, let-go intercourse, make as much noise as you like. It's curious that we need to write this down, but house and hotel designers haven't yet realized it – they all seem to be married to noiseless, childless partners, or they would build thicker walls. Totally silent intercourse, with each partner's hand firmly over the other's mouth, can be fun if you simply can't risk being overheard.

Another variation is to have two kinds of intercourse at once – straight, gentle coitus, while each partner describes some other much wilder proceeding in fantasy, perhaps for next time. The fantasy can be as wild as you like. This is the place to experience things you can't possibly act out, and to learn your partner's fantasy needs. These fantasies can be heterosexual, homosexual, incestuous, tender, wild, or bloodthirsty – don't block, and don't be afraid of your partner's fantasy; this is a dream you are in. But be careful about recording such dreams, as they can be disturbing at the daylight level. Let them go with the release of orgasm.

Lovers who really know one another won't be frightened or take advantage. If, however, you do find this double nakedness disturbing, set rules – practicable or happy fantasies only. Never, never refer to pillow talk in anger later on ("I always knew you were a lesbian" and so on). This is contemptible. The only really disturbing manifestation of love music is when a partner laughs uncontrollably – some do. Don't be uptight about this. They aren't laughing at you.

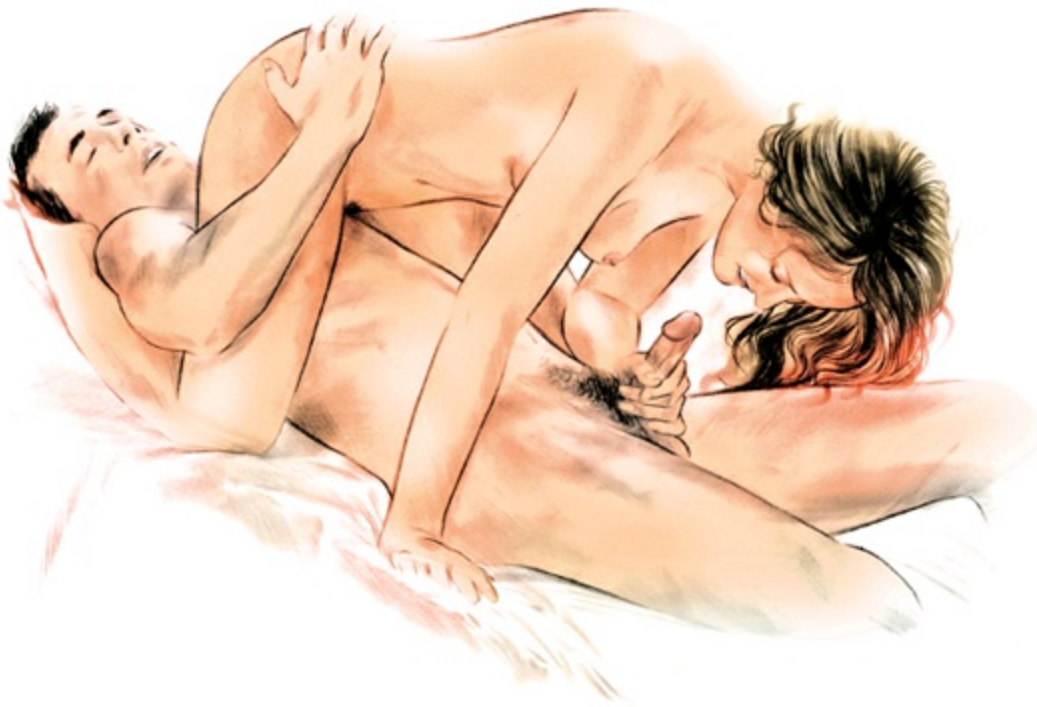
little death

La petite mort: some women do indeed pass right out, the “little death” of French poetry. Men occasionally do the same. The experience is not unpleasant, but it can scare an inexperienced partner cold. One man had this happen with the first girl he ever slept with. On recovery she explained, “I’m awfully sorry, but I always do that.” By then he had called the police and the ambulance.

So there is no cause for alarm, any more than over the yells, convulsions, hysterical laughter, or sobbing, or any of the other quite unexpected reactions that go with complete orgasm in some people. By contrast, others simply shut their eyes, but enjoy it no less. Sound and fury can be a flattering testimonial to a partner’s skills, but a fallacious one because they don’t depend on the intensity of feeling, nor it upon them.

Men can give a splendid impersonation of a fit and both sexes can also suffer instant and violent postorgasmic headaches; if symptoms occur regularly, get them checked out. In any case, you will soon get to know your partner’s pattern once you are past any initial shocks. In extremis, lay them flat with legs propped up, and, if they stay unconscious for several minutes, put embarrassment aside and call an ambulance.

come again



come again

not all can, but we are sure that far more could than actually do, men especially

Not all can, but we are sure that far more could than actually do, men especially. Multiple orgasm comes easily to many if not all women if they are responsive enough and care to go on, either with intercourse or hand or mouth work, after one orgasm; that is, women who definitely fall in the once-and-it's-over category like men do are fairly rare. Some get one continuous series of orgasms with no single, big peak. Responsiveness is beyond analysis, a subtle mixture of physiology, mood, culture, upbringing, and having the man she wants. Therefore, if she can get one really intense climax, she could probably get more if she went on. The chief exceptions are those who are fragile and tire easily, or those who want to savor the period of intense relaxation after each orgasm. If she does want to go on, the trick will be to move away from her now-too-sensitive clitoris and onto a new kind of stimulation or onto other body parts – the U-spot or urethral opening should do it (see [trigger points](#)).

With men it's more complicated because, like a flashbulb, the mechanics take time to come back into play again. (With a new partner it pays to establish this time early on – it may be shorter than you think; a great many men have been fooled by talk about sex being exhausting into a performance below what they could manage.) If he can't,

doesn't, or is worried about it, it's no use reasoning with him. You, madam, must take over. If you look disappointed, you will have had it for the night and possibly for keeps. Suggest some diversionary entertainment, giving him half an hour, then trying to stiffen him yourself using hand and mouth work. Bring this off neatly and you will have added a new dimension to both your lives. If your ministrations really aren't working, however, pull back. Reassurance, not pressure, and a reminder that your orgasm is not necessarily dependent on his erection is what he needs here.

Two important points. One: immediately after a full orgasm some men can't stand any genital stimulation – they feel it as intense pain. If he is like this, give him a half-hour or more. Two: if he really wants penetration, quite a few women can be perfectly well penetrated with the merest half-erection if taken from behind on their side. Once started, full erection often follows.

Some men when tired get an erection that lasts indefinitely, but can't reach orgasm. This sort, who are actually slow, not fast, responders, make sexual athletes, but if their orgasm never happens, it's a medical issue and bears checking out (see [his orgasm](#)).

Some couples, all passion spent but still wanting one more orgasm before finishing, like to lie facing and watch one another as they bring themselves to climax. This is an added experience, not a confession of defeat, and can be immensely and unexpectedly exciting (see [l'onanisme](#)).

excesses

Quantitatively, in sex, these don't exist – nature sees to that; the woman gets sore, the man can't go on. Medical and moral old wives have spent centuries teaching that sexual overactivity is debilitating – they were never so admonitory over excessive work or excessive exercise, and rarely over excessive eating, which is one of our most dangerous hang-ups at the moment.

Sex is, in fact, the least tiring physical recreation for the amount of energy expended. If you are flat after it, suspect either your attitude towards it, or (more commonly) secondary loss of sleep. Male lovers forget that women who work or run a home or both aren't as fresh, even though they are as willing, as the idle occupants of the old-style Ottoman seraglio. Women forget that though sex is the perfect tension relief for both sexes, preoccupation rather than physical fatigue can cause droop, especially when it goes with a wholehearted wish to perform up to and beyond Olympic standards as a matter of personal pride. Different sleep needs and sleep patterns, unrecognized and unaccommodated, can really threaten a sexual partnership. Deal with all these things by speaking out – being really in need of sleep only looks like rejection or sulking to very insecure people who can't communicate with each other.

Sex makes some languorous to the point of sedation, while others emerge boisterously productive – in the second case, get up, produce, and let your partner sleep after a suitable interval of shared quiet and love. At night there is no sleeping pill as good as violent and shared orgasm – active lovers don't need sleeping pills. If ever you do run yourself into the ground, there is no temporary exhaustion that a few hours' or days' rest won't cure.

Contrary to some belief, plenty of sex makes better and better sex – it damps down over-fast orgasm without lowering the peaks and speeds up her response: the terrific “high” after a separation doesn't depend on continence but on reunion. You can both masturbate daily while apart and still get it. Frequent sex also preserves function long into old age – not only is it a habit, but hormone levels thrive on it; so, therefore, do looks, vigor, and in particular vaginal tone. Health benefits also include reduced risk of heart disease, an immune-system boost, and a lower risk of depression. What's not to like?

One warning only: be careful if he is under the influence of the “little blue pill” – taken to serious extremes, too much activity can lead to scarring or priapism (see [his erection](#)). And while there is no such thing as too much sex per se, there is such a thing as too much done for too many wrong reasons, with too many wrong people – sex addiction. If sex is compulsive, driven, abusive, followed by shame and pain rather than fulfillment and joy, you need professional help (see [resources](#)).

simultaneous orgasm

Traditional sexologists made it aspirational: Wilhelm Reich said that it made orgasm more intense; Kinsey suggested that it was the ultimate in couple intimacy; contemporary gynecologists hint that it's one way to raise the chances of pregnancy – her orgasm draws up his sperm.

In reality, simultaneity usually happens more through coincidence and luck than good management. The difficulty here is the pull between concentrating on one's own pleasure (to get you there) and concentrating on the other's pleasure (to get them there); the balancing act can push either or both of you into “spectatoring,” cutting off from sensation. In sum, not an easy tightrope to walk.

Couples who know each other's movements well can try focusing on the typically “slower” partner, getting them up to speed, then leaving them simmering, so to speak, while the other catches up. Mutual hand work or *soixante-neuf* can help to get both to the edge before intercourse, and then the challenge will be to hold him back while she overcomes the classic dip at penetration and catches up with him again. The **CAT** may be your best option. Remember too that simultaneous doesn't necessarily mean penetrative – it's not cheating to masturbate together, nor does it preclude letting her warm up with several climaxes while he reserves his for her most reliable one.

There is an entertaining linguistic joke that the letters of “simultaneous orgasm,” when suitably rearranged, read “a single amorous must.” But it definitely isn't a must. Most couples never achieve it, so if you haven't, don't give yourself a hard time.

quickies



quickies

let it strike lightning fashion, any time and almost anywhere

Short and sharp has a charm of its own, but it needs a rate of mutual turn-on and physical response in the woman, which is learned as a rule only in much longer sessions. A really good couple can manage either at will – short and sweet, or indefinitely prolonged and differently sweet. In other words, you can't fully appreciate the virtues of the quickie without mastering the art of prolongation.

Once you have got this, the quickie is the equivalent of inspiration, and you should let

it strike lightning fashion, any time and almost anywhere, from bed in the middle of the night to halfway up a spiral stair: anywhere that you are suddenly alone and the inspiration is bilateral. Not that one or the other won't sometimes specifically ask, but the inspirational quickie is mutual; half the fun is that the preliminary communication is wordless between real lovers. The rule is never to resist this link-up if it's at all possible – and with quickness, wit, and skill, it usually is. This means proficiency in handling sitting, standing, and other postures, as well as in making love without undressing.

The ideal quickie position in terms of speedy climax, the nude matrimonial, will often be out. This may mean you have to do it on a chair, against a tree, in a washroom. If you have to wait and can go straight home, it will keep up to half an hour. Longer than that and it's a new occasion. Around the house, try not to block, even if you are busy.

holding back

Building tension to unbearable dimensions by raising, then lowering, the arousal level. Works in psychological terms by creating uncertainty and in physical terms by allowing more blood flow and so a stronger climax.

Classic arousal involves pushing ahead, keeping rhythm constant, building stimulation steadily; this is the reverse. When excitement builds, deliberately change what's happening so that progress dips temporarily in preparation for a higher peak. Most straightforward is to vary the rhythm (change stroke or keep it regular, but slow down or speed up); stopping completely is more effective, but demands more precision. Some women who like irregularity can't get there any other way.

This is a cooperative venture. Gaze into each other's eyes or listen for small shifts of breathing to gauge when to slow, when to stop, when to go on. He may break off thrusting, or she can signal him to do so, and either may halt hand or tongue. A variation is to agree that whatever happens you won't climax until permitted – or until the timer goes, or until the CD track ends. Then the tension is built from within as, together and separately, you try to surrender to the sensation without letting it overwhelm you.

Vajrayana Buddhism reputedly recommends this for both parties as a mutual path to spiritual enlightenment; it would be good to know more, but the specifics are, sadly, shrouded in secrecy. For the one-way make-'em-beg version, see [slow masturbation](#).

relaxation

It is probably the general experience, and we have been assuming here, that maximum feeling in orgasm goes with maximum muscular tension. A great many techniques – [ligottage](#) and so on – are designed to boost this tension. On the other hand, it is by no means universally true. The orgasm of total relaxation is rather harder to manage, largely because it can't be boosted artificially, but is both different and, when it works, overwhelming. There are also some people, chiefly women, for whom tension seems actively to interfere with full response and too much activity seems to cause a short-circuit cut-out of arousal.

There are writings about this that suggest, for example, that tension orgasms represent fear of full release, pain, and so on. In fact, the only universal generalization about sex seems to be that no one pattern fits everyone. How far these differences between people depend on physiology is not a practically important question – some need one and some the other. Our point is that with practice most people can widen their repertoire by learning to use both tension and relaxation, and sense the needs of the moment so as to alternate them, thereby doubling their range of physical sensation and making sex still more communicative. Certainly, some tension represents fear of letting go, and some people prefer to be “forced,” voluntarily, to accept orgasms – in this case, initially at least, it's probably sensible to make use of the responses you have. If you include this kind of reaction, however, don't forget to try the other mode.

The straight, sleepy, non-special intercourse, on your side or in the matrimonial position, is relaxed, but this isn't what we mean. In going for a fully relaxed orgasm, either one partner is totally passive and the other a soloist, or both achieve a state of non-effort in which wholly automatic movements – internal, for the woman – take over. Try both kinds – it's easier initially to work up both modes together.

Probably the best method at first is for the less-active partner in ordinary intercourse (this usually but not always means the one underneath) to try stopping all movement just as the orgasmic buildup begins and go completely limp (warn your partner first). Some people do this naturally: if you have had any relaxation training, starting by letting one finger get heavy and so on, use the same technique here.

You may find that on the first few occasions the fact of trying produces a different sort of tension, but after a few attempts, most easily stimulated people can learn to let their orgasm happen, and will find that this feels different from the equally pleasant orgasm one produces either by trying, or by struggling and postponing. Don't postpone – don't, in fact, be active at all. Practice the same kind of relaxation while your partner masturbates or sucks you. (For her, it may work better to try hand and mouth work first and move to intercourse only when you have mastered the relaxation approach.) The movements he or she makes will be physically the same as for “[slow masturbation](#)”, but the operator is looking for quite different feedback – in that “hard” version, whether the partner is tied or free, you are deliberately holding back or forcing them on, keeping just that much out of step with their reactions. In this “soft” version, you need to be a

fraction ahead of those reactions so that they don't need to move, respond, or struggle. The difference can't be described, only felt. It may mean a quicker, steadier stimulation rhythm – no slow teasing and no sudden bursts – you are doing it and they are letting it happen.

Once you have got this right in intercourse and in other kinds of stimulation, including all the extras we have mentioned, you can go on to “motionless” coitus. It won't, of course, initially be entirely motionless, but see, after the first round of gentle movement, what happens if you stop thinking. Movements of a sort will continue, but in time and with practice get less and less voluntary, especially if the woman has good vaginal muscle control (*see pompoir*). Ultimately, some people learn to insert and do nothing, but still reach an orgasm in which they totally fuse, giving the sensation of being a single person – not describable, again, and probably not always realizable, but fantastic when it happens.

We should stress that this doesn't involve going slow, holding back, or any other voluntary intervention. If you find it not working, switch back to ordinary movements, but without taking too much thought – sometimes you will both sense that the moment has come to shift position and go all out for a big one; complete fusion isn't biddable, and ordinary, athletic sex is fine. If, on the other hand, it does happen, the sensation is so extraordinary you will want to repeat it.

Reliable relaxation, and the almost frightening self-loss that goes with it, are what most sexual yogis have aimed at. Some of these sexual mystics are said to recommend a special relaxed posture (man on his left side, woman on her back at right angles, knees drawn up, legs bridging his hips, feet flat on the bed). Whether this helps may well depend on your build – though it's unclear quite how to achieve penetration at this angle. What is worth suggesting, even for people who can't totally let go, is that they play through all the techniques we have described, aiming at relaxation instead of maximum tension and adjusting their feedback accordingly. Similarly, people who naturally relax in intercourse should try occasionally to play it for full tension – just as people who like to thrash around should sometimes try being forcibly held still, and vice versa.

This sort of experimentation against one's built-in response is better value in widening one's range of lovemaking than mechanical variations of posture or trying out gadgets and stunts. It's one part of lovemaking that requires effort beyond mere curiosity, but it's essential if you hope to go as far in sexual communication as you are physically and mentally able.

afterwards

It was the philosopher Alan Watts who commented that orgasm is a delightful punctuation in the act of making love. It is not, however, a full stop, even if neither of you is able to or wants to carry on. A gentle untwining and separation, please – if penetrating, he should leave as he entered, respectfully – followed by a mutual concentration on each other to honor what has just taken place.

Physiology can both help and hinder. A cocktail of postcoital hormones can make both of you feel close and affectionate, or leave him poleaxed and her emotionally needy ([see hormones](#)). Tears here, the classic postcoital *tristesse*, are not usually a sign of real sadness or anxiety, but rather of vulnerability and a need to be close. The hormone prolactin can also signal to brain and body that the job is done and it's time to turn attention elsewhere; hence after intercourse in particular he may feel a strong inclination to withdraw in more than one meaning of the word. This is one time when he should override his instincts and instead give her strong, close physical contact and a few sentences of love talk. She can help by trusting that after that, silence or sleep isn't rejection.

If she hasn't climaxed, this would be the time for her to do it solo; a gentleman at this point offers either to oblige or to hold her attentively while she obliges. An arm under her head – or if she likes to be controlled, a hand pinning down her free wrist – along with undistracting touches and murmurs show that his focus is completely on her; she needs to know that her arousal is arousing him in turn. This could lead to another bout. If not, after her climax all the above notes come into play.

waking



waking

it's rewarding to be able to turn to a receptive partner

She says: "It's the man who wakes with an erection, but women can be woken by a vaginal ache – and it's rewarding for either to be able to turn to a receptive partner. But sleep patterns matter, and while it's great to be woken in the middle of the night with intercourse, this doesn't apply when one has had a ghastly day and has an interview coming up the next morning; use some sense. It also doesn't apply in the middle of a dream one has to finish." Some people take minutes or hours to wake up, and though she can enjoy gentle intercourse waking – and it works far better than an alarm clock – don't expect athletics. The trouble is that this is the time when many males are ready for action and expect to be ridden, masturbated, sucked, and what have you. Keep these early waking workouts for Sundays and holidays, and preferably make coffee and brush teeth first, erection or no erection. Some people are lucky in having roughly the same sleeping hours, but if one were an early bird and the other a night person, that too could well give rise to real problems. If you have these, talk about them; some people do use sleep as an excuse for avoiding intercourse, but between lovers who are on different clocks it can be real and doesn't imply rejection.

If you have children, you have to be ready to be woken by them, and restrict

yourselves accordingly (see [priorities](#)).

sauces and pickles



playtime



playtime

take off your shell along with your clothes

We have said this before, but we repeat: sex is the most important form of adult play. If you can't relax here, you never will. Don't be scared of role-play. Be the Sultan and his favorite concubine, the burglar and the maiden, even a dog and a currant bun, anything you fancy for the hell of it. Take off your shell along with your clothes.

A few people are immensely excited by having sex with the assistance of the oldest human dramatic expedient – a mask – which suppresses you and makes you someone else (see [masks](#)). Most of us can learn to make the same change without it, and when this comes, the complete mental nakedness between you is the most exhilarating sort of nudism – so complete that one is healthily scared of it at first. Getting unscared is probably the most important lesson of sex. Don't use alcohol for this – it's a neutering drug. Real sex release, when one achieves it, is what drugs and alcohol are inadequate substitutes for.

So let him be a Roman, or a gangster, or a woman, and let her be a virgin, or a slave, or a sultana, or indeed anything that turns either of you on. You weren't self-conscious about this when you were three – grow backwards again in an adult context. The rules are those of child-play – if it gets nasty, or spiteful, or unhappy, stop the game: while it

stays wild and exciting, it has a climax children's games lack – the privilege of play when you are adult.

Japanese style

Intercourse on the floor or on cushions, as with most Oriental styles: partial nakedness only, numerous squatting and semi-squatting positions, a lot of bondage, a lot of preoccupation with extras and odd devices (see [ticklers](#)). We are talking here about the sexual customs known from eighteenth- and early early-nineteenth-century Japanese prints. What would be hard to copy is the essentially Japanese mixture of violence and formality, which does not sit easily with our tradition of tenderness. Other differences are a glans cap of hard material (*kabutogata*), and merkins to hold in the hand (*azumagata*).

Postures cover the whole range, but the lovers of the “floating world” greatly enjoyed the simulation of rape – what novelist George Moore called “furious fornications” – where the artistic emphasis was on huge parts, copious secretions, and so on: sex is played hard in this tradition. Its descendants in the twenty-first century are *ero manga* or sexual comic strips: critics abhor their violence, while supporters point out that in many, sex is seen as positive and healthy, and women are portrayed as powerful. In some, young girls seem drawn to tentacled monsters. It takes all sorts.

horse

The horse is an erotic object (see [clothes](#)) and playing at horses, as well as riding them, notoriously turns some individuals on. One famous aficionado was Aristotle, who is frequently shown being ridden horseback-style by a girlfriend. Medieval moralists who took this as an awful warning miss the point.

Some men also like to dress women up as horses though they can't usually be ridden in this manner, it is mentioned here for completeness— the game (*equus eroticus*, pony-girl game) figures somewhat in traditional erotica. Either sex can be the steed. Odd how often children's games and grown-up sex games converge. Some people purchase a whole outfit, including bit, saddle, and so on, or in S&M play get the submissive to pull a small trap.

Indian style

Now widely familiar from the *Kama Sutra*, the *Koka Shastra*, and so on. Intercourse on a bed or on cushions, fully naked, but with the woman wearing all her ornaments. Features many complicated positions, including some derived from yoga that are aimed to delay ejaculation (see [karezza](#)), standing positions, and woman-on-top positions (*purushayita*), which are regarded as specially devout, since in Tantric Hinduism she is Energy and he is Immanence.

All, if you do it in the original spirit and not for variety only, are intimately linked with the Indian love of living at several levels – not only sex, but meditative technique in which one attempts to be subjectively both male and female for mystical purposes, or modified dance in which besides making love one acts out a scene from the hagiography of Vishnu and his Avatars, or the Life of Rama. There is a section on sexual technique in the chief classical dance treatise – dancers were temple maidens or *devadasis* who gave themselves to the devout as part of a religious exercise. Difficult for us to recapture, in spite of a dawning awareness of the psychoanalytic rightness of much Hindu intuition.

Specialities include love cries (see [birdsong at morning](#)), love blows (struck with the fingertips on one another's breast, back, buttocks, and genitals), love bites as tokens of possession, and erotic scratch marks – extensive skin stimulation with specially grown, lengthy fingernails, from mere brushing to a passionate scratch (classically confined to the armpit area and the “girdle path” – pantie region – where marks won't be revealed in Indian day dress).

Of all the Indian techniques, the standing postures are probably the best worth learning, if the woman is light enough. Few women who weren't trained from birth could, for example, stand leaning backwards on feet and hands, limbo-style, then put their arms around their legs and their head between their thighs so as to take alternate strokes in mouth and vagina – or manage the one-leg-standing, one-leg-around-waist poses cultivated by temple girls. The outstanding Indian accomplishment, the full *pompoir*, comes from the Tamil South, and unfortunately isn't taught in the texts (see [pompoir](#)).

A subset of Indian sexuality, Tantric sex is currently very à la mode but largely misunderstood. Translation – or fashion – frequently focuses on positions and techniques; however, the real heart of Tantric sex is in not performing, not even aiming at orgasm, but simply being here and now: breathing, moving, feeling the arousal rather than pushing on. Tantric “bliss” is not just about pleasure: remember that the word *Tantra* means “woven together.”

virginity

Traditionally, virginity has been more about her, enforced both as a way of protecting and of controlling; in reverse, for him, the significant act was in losing it, as a sign of prowess. Nowadays, in some societies, sex before marriage is a sin, while in others it's a death sentence. In yet others still it's a relief; young people who want to feel loved, to prove love, to conform – or to dominate – worry if they don't have their “first time” at around about the same time their cohorts do.

In the event that you are someone's first, stay with the non-coital extras until you are both quite sure you want to go further, and have thought through the implications of doing so. Whatever you do, be gentle and slow – whether male or female, they are bound to be nervous even if they don't look it. Expect that his erection or her lubrication may simply not happen; both can be helped with respectful hand work, with careful fingers in her vagina to stretch her beforehand. It shouldn't hurt – if it does, it's too much too soon; wait until next time. There is no rush. Honeymoons, which traditionally lasted a month, or “moon,” were that long for a reason, not only to give the couple time to explore sexually but also to let them get emotionally close enough to make exploration feel safe. (If you find yourself getting into bed with someone who is a virgin on only a few minutes' or hours' acquaintance, you are going too fast for both of you.)

She is more likely to have a less than positive first-time experience; he will probably get off on the symbolism of having done it, while she may fail to get off. Any regrets can be eased by realizing that this is normal – only about a third of women report enjoying the event – and that one's literal first time isn't necessarily the important one. Breaking the hymen is one thing, meaningful and joyful sexual initiation quite another. She can choose to see the former as simply a practice session, with her real “first time” being first arousal, first orgasm, or first love.

As for surgically renewed virginity, it's too often done in the context of the belief that women have no right to sexual experience. At the opposite end of the extreme, there is a great deal to be said for role-play – an enacted “first night” with one partner feigning inexperience and needing to be seduced; not a bad way of celebrating an anniversary. Real enthusiasts do the whole thing properly, honeymoon hotel and all; one can even book the same room in advance. Or one can do it oftener, at home, and at shorter notice. All one needs do is to say, “Tonight, I'm a virgin again.”

clothes



clothes

if your partner has a preference you can meet, you are unstoppable

It's part of the recovery from puritanism that most people now make love naked and most lovers sleep together naked. Clothes, when they are worn, are there to be taken off – making love can very well start by undressing one another, or by one partner stripping for the other. Women's magazines offer what amount to practical courses on burlesque-type stripping (see [striptease](#)) as a turn-on for the man, but this use of clothing is a conventional routine – for a start, it need not be the woman who strips.

Each partner, moreover, should practice removing the clothes of the other sex without clumsiness or hold-ups, and preferably with one hand.

Clothes and their removal as a kick have, if one wants to be serious about it, a whole biology in terms of “releasers,” a releaser being what turns somebody on. The releasers for the male are garments that emphasize breasts and buttocks or, like tight panties, “simplify the outline” of the female. Women are not so dependent on this sort of concrete signaling – having the right man is their chief releaser – and anyway these days in public it’s often customary for men to hide their sexual signals behind loose trousers and buttoned shirts. But many women have preferences – a man naked from the waist down can act as part of the preliminary scenery, and habitual nudity in bed and about the house doesn’t blunt these natural reactions.

Quite apart from this, some people react very strongly to particular clothing situations on a lock-and-key basis – usually these are men, occasionally women. This is the basis of sexual fashions. Exactly what works on a particular person is highly individual; in this case he often knows and will ask for it. These clothing turn-ons work exactly as a salmon fly works for the salmon. A bunch of feathers doesn’t look like anything the salmon eats (and when one fishes for them at salmon run they aren’t feeding in any case), but it combines a whole range of unrelated stimuli that excite curiosity, aggression, and enough other fishy emotions to provoke a strike.

Human turn-ons are equally complicated. Quite how they become programmed in a given individual isn’t known, but there is an identifiable repertoire of components, like the repertoire of feathers one can use in a lure, from which most of these stimuli are made. Superskin is one – tightness, shininess, and skin-like texture. Super-genitalness is another – firm pubis, space between the thighs, extra pubic hair. Also mild threat – blackness, leatheriness, sadistic-looking buckles; submission – tied-upness, slave bangles; and the suggestion of genitals elsewhere – red lips, emphasis on the feet; shininess and tinkling earrings; chains; womanness – tiny waist, big breasts and buttocks, long hair. And so on. Humans love to fool around with the body image and alter it.

Other turn-ons are textures – wetness, fur, rubber, plastic, leather. Many people respond slightly to all, and this is another basis of sexual fashion. Some people respond so strongly to a few that they don’t hit full sexual function without them (*see fetishes*). But the selection is highly individual and to tie your fly you have to know your salmon. Every such lure typically has several layers – tight, shiny, black leather is a superskin with a womanly smell; it also suggests acceptance of the forcefulness of sex. Tiny, tight G-strings stress but hide her pussy, hold her perfume so she can be kissed through them, and suggest wicked, sexy girls rather than chaste sister figures. Corsets make her hourglass-shaped and suggest tightness and helplessness. And so on. A horse, seen from behind, is a “releaser” for men – it has long hair, big buttocks, and a teetering walk. A cow isn’t.

Many woman have similar turn-ons themselves, but some tend to be wary of them as weird, and, in particular, to feel “he’s in love with gloves or black lingerie, not with me.” This is the wrong approach for either sex. If your partner has a physical turn-on, it has nothing to do with their valuation of you, and they will love you more the more

skillfully you sense and use it; hence you can catch your favourite fish at every cast. Don't try to turn yourself into something you are not – you need to feel comfortable when responding to your partner's turn-ons – but if he or she has a preference you can meet, you are unstoppable. The “you” part is in letting them see you sense it and meet it. If you too have turn-ons, say so and use them.

So, if he likes you to look like a cross between a snake and a seal, wear what he gives you, at least sometimes. If you like him a particular way, see that he knows it. Some women are bothered that a man who occasionally likes them to dress him in their clothes is unvirile (it causes less anxiety the other way round). But all of us have a person of the opposite sex inside us – Queen Omphale dressed the hero Hercules in her clothes, and he wasn't exactly unvirile. This is a common game or ceremony in other cultures. We accept sex as pleasure and are starting to accept it as play. Now we need to accept it as ceremony, plus the fact that we are all bisexual and that sex includes fantasy, self-image, role-play, and the other things that our society still finds worrying. Bed is the place to act these things out – that is one of the things human sex is for ([see playtime](#)).

Clothing that maintains continuous sexual excitement is an old human expedient, and well worth experimenting with. Most of it is designed for women, not especially out of male chauvinism but simply because of the difference in physiology: a continuous turn-on enhances the woman's eventual response yet would tend to overload the man's and make him peak too quickly and so unable to perform long term. The traditional instances are geared to feel sexy for the wearer and look sexy to her partner. Some could be helpful in relearning the proper sexual use of our skin. They range from long, heavy earrings to tight straps, corsets, and belts, rough textures (hair- and bamboo-ring shirts), ankle chains, footwear that affects the gait and presses on the instep, and thongs that fit well into the vulva.

Most turn women on by their skin and muscle effect and men by their symbolism, but some couples get a special kick if she wears something wild under ordinary clothes on social occasions when one can't go home early. Could be worth trying for men too, if only in the interest of fair shares. Continuous sexual excitement you can't stop or do anything about would make a dull event more interesting, and guarantees good lovemaking when you do get home.

Special preferences apart, it's worth knowing as much as possible about the common turn-ons because for most couples they have stunning surprise value as unscheduled extras on special occasions. If a particular one doesn't work, you needn't repeat it.

corset

An obligatory article of fashion in the past, now back as an everyday evening style that's also useful for sex games. Makes a woman still more woman-shaped. Firm pressure on the waist and abdomen excites many women. Probably works through tightness and skin pressure, but a lot of symbolisms are also involved.

G-string

No longer confined to sex shops, now widely available. It should tightly cover the whole pussy and pubic hair, nothing else. It should undo from the sides with hooks, or better still with ribbons, so that it can be taken off when astride without kicking the man. It is best made of silk, not nylon, because it holds her perfume better. Other materials can be used as turn-ons, for looks, but can't really be kissed through – if she wants to use these, she should wear them over the silk “leaf.”

The sexiest G-string is one that isn't used for street wear, but reserved only for sex: the first direct genital kiss is given, or taken, through it. Later, she can surprise him by suddenly taking the two ends and putting it hard over his nose and mouth.

A variation on the G-string is the thong, which presses on the perineum; correctly worn, by him as well as her, it can leave one gasping. Open-fronted panties aren't the same thing. Edible panties are a joke, but if you must, don't simply chew them off; nibble and lick piecemeal.

shoes

High heels attract some males, maybe for their effect in increasing the wobble in the female gait, another instance of making the woman appear more woman-shaped.

That said, for most lovemaking you really need bare feet. For which purpose, to take shoes off elegantly, she shouldn't bend, but stay standing, lift up the leg behind, and remove one-handed.

boots

Notorious sex turn-on for many people – the longer the better. Complicated symbolism here involving aggression (jackboots and so on). Used to be the badge of the prostitute – now general wear for everyone: odd how the market in the respectability of sexually symbolic clothing swings over the years. One could learn a lot about human imprinting by plotting the prevalence of such preferences.

Good for dressing-up games if you like them. But a spiked heel is a dangerous weapon, so take care; hence not very practical for serious sex unless you keep them for non-horizontal, non-bed activities. If her man likes them, she should try appearing suddenly in long, tight, black shiny ones.

stockings

Can be a sex turn-on – often the preferred ones are old-style black stockings, which look extra naughty when paired with suspender belts that draw attention to the essential zone. Tights are an obstacle unless crotchless, and non-erotic in any form. It's said that if he can get one stocking off her, he is home. Actually, in quick undressing or actual lovemaking, both tights and stockings get ruined, but if you keep your nails and fingers smooth, taking them off gently makes good foreplay, along with mutual undressing generally. Long gloves turn some people on; they suggest the old-style great lady.



clothes

there to be taken off

ben-wa balls

When Japanese, called *rin-no-tama*; come in various configurations designed to massage vaginal spots (see [trigger points](#)), from simple pairs of plastic spheres to metal balls one inside the other or those with a built-in vibrator. They can either be inserted into the vagina or put between the labia (don't insert in the anus, as they can get lost). Movement, including walking, then produces a quite unique pelvic sensation more intermittent and intimate than a vibrator. Some can be used in intercourse, others to maintain a steady stimulation – all day, if she can take it. If she can't keep them in, she should try plastic ones, which are less likely to drop. If she can't get them out, she should take a deep breath and bear down. Useful for strengthening pelvic floor muscles (see [pompoir](#)).

boutons

Any device – often a penis ring – worn over his pubis and providing an additional pressure point for the clitoris. One particularly fine specimen was described in the first edition of this book as “Chinese and made of ivory (with) two sky-dragons ... sporting with a pearl (the semen) – in use, the pearl is a small knob to fit the clitoris, the scales of the dragons open and tickle the labia, and the whole thing is held in place by a long tape passed through a hole, back between the legs, crossing behind the scrotum, up between the buttocks and then round the waist.”

Jelly plastic has now solved the problems of clitoral knobs being too hard to be comfortable, and some come with vibrators. Begin with classic him-on-top positions where he rides high and can keep the vibrating part in constant contact. Then experiment; he may need to grind with a circular movement rather than thrusting.

rubber

This turns some people on, and is a whole-time fetish with others. Its effect seems to depend on its status as superskin combined with tightness and odor. The odor of latex rubber excites some people if they have come to associate it with using condoms. Rubber is difficult to clean – try washing in soapy water. Black seems to be the preferred sexual color.

leather



leather
a turn-on that women respond to as much as men

Probably the most popular superskin turn-on. Black hide also looks aggressive or scary and is the S&M textile of choice, for dominators and dominated alike; others, even if they are not into bondage, like to be encased in it or to see a partner encased. Unlike rubber, you can wear it without being thought weird, which is yet another example of the arbitrary social choice of sex turn-ons in clothing. If your partner likes it on you, let them do the buying. This is one object turn-on that women respond to as much as men,

especially if it feels and smells right (*see* [boots](#)).

striptease



striptease

a magnificent prelude to lovemaking

The modern version probably began in the 1890s at the Moulin Rouge in Montmartre, Paris. In one variation, a woman removed her clothes in a vain “search” for a flea. Once seen as immoral and illegal but now par for the course, strip shows, and their more hands-on sister lap-dancing clubs, may still leave a bad taste because of the possibility of performer exploitation.

It could now be her in the audience almost as easily as him; the Chippendales dancers began that shift in the early 1980s and the film *The Full Monty* completed it in 1997. For partner purposes, the important thing is to agree on boundaries before either of you proceeds. One way could be to attend a show together – with a non-breakable “we leave now” signal – and then discuss afterwards whether it’s OK to go again, and whether separately or together. Variations include floor shows, pole dancing, peep shows, and private dancing monitored by ceiling camera; if you want actually to touch, choose the more rowdy audience-participation events aimed at girls’ or stag nights, or go to a lap-dancing club where, for the length of one song, she will rub up against you. New Burlesque is the up-market, cabaret version with expensive fin-de-siècle, choreographed poses and a strictly hands-off policy.

When stripping for each other, it’s the performance of Burlesque that’s most easily copied and most elegant. A magnificent prelude to lovemaking, particularly when she offers it as a gift to him – “tease” here is the operative word. She needs attitude for this, head high, breasts out, hands running along body contours to direct “audience” attention. Keep eye contact. Traditionally, she rolls down her stockings one at a time,

leg raised on a chair; holds her bra across her breasts for a moment before lowering it to reveal; slides knickers down over hips; steps out of them slowly and kicks them aside. She can end by straddling the chair and quickly bringing herself to climax – with him forbidden to join in – before straddling him.

She could [blindfold](#) him and give a running commentary of what she is doing, with occasional light touches to keep him involved yet uncertain. She should remove the blindfold only when she is fully naked and ready to arouse him. Or not remove it until afterwards.

transvestitism

Many people enjoy dressing in each other's clothes on occasion for the hell of it. So feel free to play: for curiosity, as an outlet for stress, to indulge your tender or tough side, to be in control, or to be pampered. In the bedroom, make it sensuous; in public, be aware that however well he in particular walks, he won't fool anyone.

That, however, isn't transvestitism. A transvestite is a person who, while staying fully in his or her own sex role, feels an intense compulsion at times to dress the opposite sex role, and an intense release of anxiety (not so much a kick) when they do so. Such cross-dressing doesn't make someone homosexual, and a bisexual person who dresses the opposite sex to please a partner isn't necessarily a transvestite. A transexual, on the other hand, is a person, often but not always male, who actively wants to turn into a person of the other sex, by surgery if necessary, and feels totally miscast as they are.

In some simpler societies, there are roles or ceremonies that discharge these needs (wizards often cross-dress). In our society, they can cause anxiety. A transvestite with an informed and unscared partner usually finds that his compulsion, whatever its cause, doesn't affect his sex life in the male role (if he has to keep it secret or his partner thinks he is odd or crazy, which he isn't, he can get really sick from worry). A transexual needs expert help and may or may not be the happier for a sex-change operation. A lot of unhappiness could be avoided if people knew the facts to the point of not being shocked if they come across them. If you have a partner with any of these issues, help them by comprehension and see that they – and just as importantly you – get counseling support if wanted (see [resources](#)).

ice and fire

Ice is the last material one would consider sexy – yet people do use it for its shock effect on the skin. One sex book suggests that just before orgasm the woman should slap a handful of crushed ice on her partner's back. Other people use an ice cube to go slowly over a partner's skin, including the soles of the feet, put them in each other's navels during sexual games, put sex toys in the fridge, rub ice chips on her tongue for mouth work that slows him down, and so on. Not so strange, when you come to think of it – cold is a strong skin stimulus. We see no objection to experiments if you like the idea – you will hardly catch cold from one ice cube. Don't use super-cooled ice, let alone dry ice; these stick fast to moist surfaces and burn like a red-hot iron. Test any ice cube on your elbow, and don't place or leave ice in any sensitive orifice – a touch is enough, for safety reasons.

Fire should be approached with even more caution. A plain, unscented candle can be held above any area without body hair and the wax dripped down; control the temperature by the height at which you hold the candle. Again, be sure to test first.

Alternating ice and fire activates two sets of nerve endings and sensitizes any skin area. Immerse one dildo in hot water, another in cold; switch when the effect of either seems to be wearing off.

body paints

Possibly the most ancient form of art, traditionally used as sexual decoration; revived in the West when nudity was liberalized, around the time this book was first written. See the iconic August 1992 cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine, showing actor Demi Moore naked except for a painted man's suit.

Simplest in use and end result are the edible chocolate or fruit-flavored ones sold for Christmas or Valentine's Day; spread towels on the floor, get naked, use fingers to apply and tongues to remove, then carry on from there. Children's body paints have a wider range, so can produce works of art; test an area first in case of allergies and don't use near eyes, open wounds, or any body orifice. Otherwise, anything goes: drizzle from the tube; use paint gloves; apply brushes to nipples and scrotum; write your name; outline two hearts; paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling on your partner's back. While being painted, lie still and enjoy the sensations and the feeling of being the center of attention. Completed, stand in front of a mirror – or between two if the artwork is on your back – and admire, take photos, then shower together. Feels good, helps you let go, can be the hors d'oeuvre to lovemaking or just pure fun. But then, what is sex but adult play?

skin gloves and thimbles

A whole glove, or a fingertip cover the size of a thimble, each covered with cloth ranging in texture from soft fur to hard pile. They are used for erotic massage of the skin in either sex. With a properly chosen range of bristles and some natural skill, these can produce an effect that ranges from the pleasant to the excruciating (see [pattes d'araignée](#)).

ticklers

The great exponents of the sort of hardware that adds texture to the penis were traditionally the Japanese. Judging from travellers' tales, most such sex aids were used by men at the insistence of women; they must have been unusually keen to please in order to bore through the glans and fit a "sprit-sail yard," like the Kayans, or insert pebbles under the skin of the penis itself, like the Sumatrans. In softer cultures, such devices are external – chiefly rings that fit around the coronal groove, made of feathers (*palang unus* – Malaya), goats' eyelids sewn back to back (Patagonia), or little hair brushes. These things are in museums, or one would wonder if somebody was putting an impertinent ethnographer on. The remarkable thing is that they should stay in place during intercourse. Nearly all are damnably uncomfortable to wear, and either pinch or trap hairs painfully.

Nowadays, while some opt for glans piercings, we are more likely to use textured sheaths, which come in all manner of shapes and contours, the aim being to roughen both the penis and the vaginal barrel. Some have knobs or fingers to tickle the cervix. These are supposed to help the female enjoy, but it's rare to meet a woman who likes them.

The kind with a thick corona ring or twist seem downright painful. They also destroy the direct physical contact, which, in communicative sex, matters a lot, but they allow one to experiment. Such sexual Easter bonnets at least add novelty if you like the idea.

games

You never need an excuse for sex. But if you do, or need a push beyond the boundaries (something you have never dared try, someone you have never dared try it with), there is a great deal to be said for sex games where the must-be-obeyed rules can override internal doubts. This may be incredibly liberating or incredibly unwise – mostly it turns out to be pure fun, though not to be tried with strangers or under the influence of over-much alcohol.

Blind man's buff was the original one, allowing uptight Victorians to catch hold of each other; hide and seek in a large house allowed even closer contact and is still an excuse for preadolescents to fumble. Strip poker used to be the adult equivalent, but there is now a huge commercial market in board games that aim for the same result without the cardsharp skill, from gentle romance where each is encouraged to compliment each other, to group stripping activities and more. There is a huge difference between games that encourage just talking – answering trivia questions, admitting past history – and games that lead on to actually doing it. What's important is that before you start, you honestly discuss the possibilities.

Playing only with a lover, however edgy the game turns out to be, will almost always work and give a “framework” for new ideas that can transform future bedtime routines. Playing with friends can either deepen the friendship or bring worms out from under stones. By all means choose a diversion that pushes limits, but go nowhere near one that's going to leave you – or worse, your beloved – remorseful or resentful in the morning.

If there is no game to hand, or you need to initiate one unexpectedly, give each player six tokens (nuts, sweets). These may then be given one at a time to a coplayer of choice in return for answering a risky question, performing a sexual dare, and so on. This can actually push the limits just as much as, and even more quickly than, the full panoply of purpose-designed board, cards, dice, and score sheets.

masks

These excite some people: if this seems odd, remember that they are the oldest human device for getting mystical as well as sexual inspiration, by making the wearer menacing, other than themselves, and “possessed” by the mask, and by altering their body self-image through partial sensory deprivation. Sex, however, must surely be better without one’s head in a bag. Putting the woman’s panties over the man’s head, an old boudoir trick, works on quite a different basis. Masks, like corsets, were once a general fashion. Don’t, under any circumstances, fool around with plastic bags – these are dangerous because they obstruct breathing.

fetishes

Some people need these as well as, or instead of, a partner in order to reach full sexual response. Less often evident in women than in men, so far as concrete objects or routines are concerned, though women can make fetishes of such things as security, fear, and subtler nuances of setting.

Can be of all kinds – embryonic fetishes are present in almost everyone, and their satisfaction is part of the art as well as the function of love. Most of us respond better with a partner who has a particular hair color or length – such preferences are so common that the main ones are universally accepted. Particular garments come next – she is more desirable with stockings, or with shoes, or with earrings, whereas he looks good when suited, or leather jacketed, and so on. Use any of these turn-on circumstances to their fullest extent.

Why we make such links is still unclear, even after decades of research. They might have been directly learned, if childhood arousal was linked with some arbitrary object that happened to be around at the time. Or they might be linked with guilt – in societies where sex is forbidden, we can be driven to focus desire on a non-sexual object. Just lately, the neuroscientists are in on the act: the part of the brain that focuses on the feet is apparently next to the one that focuses on sex; maybe shoe fetishism is just down to slippage.

All this only becomes a problem if it swamps everything and develops into a consuming anxiety (shoes only, not even women with shoes), or if it happens to be a fantasy that turns you on and your partner off, or if the performance gets more and more complicated and anxious until a halt has to be called. Normal sexual play can meet nearly all demands of this kind if there is real communication. It will help if you both explore each other's preferences until you really understand – then rigorously divide your attention and the focus of your play between fetish and partnership; you both need to know the place you hold in the other's affection.

A word, in this context, about normality. Some sex behaviors are obviously odd, and restrict the range of enjoyment – like the man who could only reach orgasm by getting into a bath of cooked spaghetti. He, however, liked it that way. Nowadays, psychologists don't usually ask "Is this normal?" but "Is this behavior (a) spoiling someone's chances of being a full person and (b) tolerable for society?" Definitions change; behaviors that when this book was first written were considered a little weird are now included as standard in most people's repertoires. People are much less worried now about what "normal" is and does.

"Normal" can, though, still be used as a benchmark, implying that there is something that sex ought to be. There is. It ought to be a wholly satisfying link between two affectionate people, from which both emerge unanxious, rewarded, and ready for more. That definition includes the awareness that people differ wildly in what they need; since sex is cooperative, you can cater to one another alternately to bridge gaps. If you must talk about "normality," any sex behavior is normal that (1) you both enjoy, (2) hurts

nobody, (3) isn't associated with anxiety, and (4) doesn't cut down your scope. As Jane Austen said, "One half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other," although this doesn't mean to say that the pleasures of either half are wrong. The Internet has dedicated websites for any fetish you might think of, and hundreds you have never even dreamed of.

However, it's still more than unwise to take on a partner whose sexual preferences differ from yours in major respects; eventually it will drive you apart. And don't take on a partner with a major sex problem or compulsive ritualism in order to "cure them by love." You won't – though if they have your love and comprehension, life will be much easier. If you have taken on a problem of this kind – and the measure of whether it's a problem is whether it causes anxiety and interferes with sexual joy – work it out between you without fear or recrimination, and if necessary, go to an expert ([see resources](#)).

equipment



equipment

if you use extras of any sort, make sure they are at hand and don't have to be fetched

The Austrian gymnastic professor Van Der Weck Erlen wrote a book in which, along with providing more than five hundred postures you draw lots to carry out, he advised a “sexuarium” complete with gymnastic mat and trapezes. For his sort of sex, you would need them.

The idea of a “sexuarium” with mirrors, red light, and black décor turns some people on – there are a good few 1930s palaces in Beverly Hills that have one. New lovers are more likely to opt for the exotic or for christening every room in the house: try sex from in front on the kitchen counter-top; sit her astride the washing machine set to vibrating spin cycle; place her lying up the stairs. Most couples’ preference, when passion settles, is for the bedroom, and the result needn’t be boring.

The bed is discussed elsewhere (*see* [beds](#)). The gymnastic mat idea isn’t a bad one at all – a really thick carpet (or rug) is as good, with plenty of room to roll around. Some people favor stools for the bent-over positions, front and back. A pile of hard, square cushions is more suited for diversification. Two of the bed pillows should be hard, for use

in bed – the cushions are for floor work.

The best chair for intercourse is a fully upholstered one without arms. If you want to tie each other to it, check for size and convenience – if you only want it for straight intercourse, it's best padded all over: or have separate chairs for each. The ordinary hotel bedroom layout is excellent for all these things, except that they don't pick the chairs with an eye to coition.

If you want extras, these will depend on what you want to do. Acrobatic position merchants like to have a step-stool (fixed down, so it isn't dangerous) or even a short ladder. Some people fancy a rocking chair (*see* opposite). A ceiling mirror is fun, but expensive, and obvious if you mind that. Old-style bordels went in for all manner of stage sets, but these were either for the obsessed or once-in-a-while settings for an extra kick rather than permanencies. Nowadays, erotic furniture websites offer everything from simple wedges that support sex positions to heavy-duty bondage frames; much of this is designed to look like normal furniture or modern art, but can then be rearranged to be fit for purpose.

Candles are an atmospheric extra – the alternative is low atmospheric lighting or a dimmer switch. You can also add a camera or video camera (*see* [erotica](#)). If you use extras of any sort, from cushions or vibrators to cameras, lubricants, ropes, or G-strings, make sure they are at hand and don't have to be fetched – with children in the house, a lockable bedside cabinet is also a good idea. Stock this with a cloth towel or paper towels – tissues stick to the skin. But you don't need any of these things to have superlative sex, given the right person and the right attitude.

Probably the only advantage of a really private sex room is that you can fill it with erotic pictures without eroticizing normal guest space, and entertain Auntie without her asking what those rings in the wall are for. But a projector works fine on any white wall or ceiling, and you would be surprised how unobservant the uninitiated can be.

Naturally, it's exciting to set up a fantasy place for fantasy experiences, complete with your own light show, if you have the money and the energy. What we don't want to do here is to give the impression that you really need this – you don't, any more than you need a dream kitchen in order to be a first-class chef. You need the bare minimum – privacy, heating, washing space, a bed, one or two ordinary furniture surfaces, genitalia that work, love, and imagination.

rocking chair

Tried by some as an indoor substitute for that classic piece of sexual gear, the swing (*see below*). Actually, it feels quite different, lacking the sudden belly-dropping acceleration – the source of the swing’s effects on women – but more like the sensation of love in a train (*see [trains](#), [boats](#), [planes](#)*). It works best with an ill-made chair on a very hard, rough floor – better, an erotic rocking chair with a dozen flats or studs on each rocker, hard cushions, and no arms. This still needs a hard, preferably stone, floor and is infernally noisy – useless for an apartment if people live below. Normally, you sit astride facing, but other positions are possible.

swings

These are one erotic extra that emphatically do work. Swinging solo can give many women an orgasm, because the acceleration produces pressure in the pelvis like nothing else.

Swings are of two sorts – those mentioned by Eastern writers are simply suspended garden-seat beds, not capable of this kind of acceleration, but giving the agreeable feelings that go with a slightly unstable surface. For him, this is like having a woman with infinite buttocks, for her it's a swimmy sensation, devoid of the drawbacks of an over-soft mattress, since the actual surface can be firm.

The real high-velocity swing is the woman's turn-on unless she gets airsick first. The operative thing is the swoop, the falling-elevator sensation of negative G-force. Swinging with a well-implanted partner is a sensation every woman should experience at least once in a lifetime: solo swinging with the Japanese *rin-no-tama* (see [ben-wa balls](#)) is another wild experience of inner movement.

For intercourse, he sits on the seat, and she astride facing – he works the swing, or a third party pushes (traditionally the maidservant). Ideally, one should try the roller coaster, but we haven't found a fairground that permits that. If using a conventional garden swing, watch out for the woman whose orgasm under these conditions is so intense that she blacks out, even if she doesn't do so normally, as she may fall if he doesn't hold her (see [little death](#)). Start at rest and penetrated, and use the movements of working up the swing to drive your coitus.

jokes and follies



jokes and follies
laughter is a measure of how well you love

Sex, contrary to cultural traditions among prudes, is preeminently the right place for these. The best jokes too tend for this reason to be at the prudes' expense. The finger-raising quality of lovers vis-à-vis society is as necessary psychologically as their tenderness to each other. That, and not just the spice of danger, is what makes love in odd places and under other people's unperceptive noses so attractive. This is childish, but if you haven't yet learned to be childish in your lovemaking, you should go home and learn, because it's important.

One mustn't let the joke go wrong and sour things: if you can have intercourse in a public restaurant or on Auntie's dining table and bring it off, you can laugh about it after (but if you don't bring it off, you will be lucky if you speak to each other again). Most couples contain, for any given occasion, one danger lover and one restraining influence, and achieve accordingly a common-sense balance, helped by the angel who watches over such lunatic antics and protects lovers from the consequences. All in all, it would be stupid to recommend them, but a pity to have missed them.

The amount of laughter you have in intercourse, pranks apart, is a measure, we think, of how well you are managing to love. It's evidence for, not against, the seriousness of

your communication. If you have this, the laughs never fail, because sex is funny. If you haven't, you end with boxed ears or tears or no orgasm all around, through some remark "destroying the atmosphere." When it's really going, laughter is part of the atmosphere – even mockery isn't unaffectionate, though you should never laugh at, only with, and there is no joke like love well and mutually completed under unlikely circumstances. It's one of the few contemporary occasions that gets a laugh out of pure joy.

Taking a partner (usually female) round to social occasions nude, or in some sexy gear, under a long coat is a game that some couples relish. It can be dangerous – if you must do it, make sure she really enjoys it. The no-panties bit is on the whole dangerous enough for most women unless it's very much their thing.

mirrors



mirrors

turn lovemaking into a viewing occasion

These have always been an important part of sexual furniture in any bedroom not wholly devoted to sleeping. They turn lovemaking into a viewing occasion without loss of privacy and help it progress at a practical level. They also provide a turn-on by letting you see yourselves – he can see his own erection and movements without stopping. She may be turned on by seeing her own body, watching herself masturbate, seeing herself bound, or any of the other fantasies one can enact, so that both

experience viewer as well as participant pleasure.

Those who don't like them, by contrast, say they spoil the shut-in, non-spectator feeling they need to appreciate sensation to the full, and make the bedroom less like a womb with twins in it and more like Tiffany's. Plus it must be said that the feelings of exposure mirrors bring may make her in particular struggle with internal insecurities that she is not as magnificent as the current media icons, who – we too often forget – have been enhanced by specialist lighting and computer magic. Loving and genuine fascination with her body is the best way to silence her self-doubt.

If you have never made love in front of a big mirror, try it. You really need more than one to enable both of you to see clearly without having to shift around. The exercise is worth it, not only for voyeur effect but to show you how unridiculous you look making love. Sex described in cold blood, like instructions on how to put up a deck chair, sounds undignified, but seen as one participates, it is natural, attractive, and formally beautiful to a morale-boosting extent. If there does come a time when it's better to feel only, and never look, we haven't reached it yet.

Old-style brothels went in for rooms of a hundred mirrors. Expense apart, these may or may not work for you; a hundred couples acting in unison may be your turn-on, or they may remind you of Red Square on May Day or a Roman orgy rather than lovemaking.

trains, boats, planes

Railways were an old and favored site for “different” sex – now hardly possible given new-style open compartments, except possibly in sleeper cars when there are only two of you. Whether it’s the motion and acceleration or the association with love on the run that provides the turn-on isn’t clear: it’s said that the classier Parisian and Viennese bordels used to have a compartment fitted up, complete with train effects and noises, and vibrated by a motor and cams. Since it’s probably the motion that scores, choose a hard couch, and a winding track with numerous intersections and switches. In emergency, there is just enough room for an upright in the washroom.

More usual nowadays – and also dependent on washroom use – is sex on planes. Otherwise known as the Mile High Club – whose founder, Laurence Sperry, inventor of the autopilot, once emerged naked from a crash landing in water along with his female passenger; the ensuing headline read: “Aerial Petting Ends in Wetting.” The rush with air travel may be due to the vibration, the lower atmospheric pressure increasing orgasmic intensity, or simply the illicit nature of it all. If desperate and unwilling to go the washroom route, one can work wonders with wandering hands under strategically placed airplane blankets and a tolerant cabin crew.

Boats, despite the challenges of instability, offer huge possibilities; big ships have private cabins; small ones can be sailed away to remote locations.

cars

These approach the ideal form of locomotion, the “double bed with an outboard motor.” Big old cars come very close to it (there is room to lie flat, even on the rear seat). Current smaller machines call for neat handling of anything more than breast-and-petting work. The classical postures (she on the backseat, he kneeling between her legs, or both sitting, her legs around his waist) were developed for use by Madame Bovary in hansom cabs. All cars, whether adapted to petting or coition, can be goldfish bowls unless you live in a climate where the windows quickly mist over. If you rely on condensation, it’s nevertheless a good idea to have a powerful light ready to dazzle potential prowlers.

For alfresco love, the least-screened parking site is the safest, like a French 18th-century bower, because you can’t be crept up on. Remember, however, that in most countries motorvehicle action visible from outside can earn perpetrators a stern police warning, or worse (*see* [voyeurs](#)). If you want to do much of this, buy a small van, or one of those mini-campers known as adultery wagons, which are in effect mobile houses. It takes confidence to strip naked in any of these. Mutual masturbation while on the move, and trying to score the number of orgasms per gallon, are popular fantasies, but against both the law and the interests of safe driving. For those who like restraint, seat belts can be worn or you can tie one party to his or her seat and approach your work slowly.

open air



open air

enthusiastic larks call for very remote areas

Countries with a warm summer have advantages that can't be overstated. In England, to have regular and full love outdoors, you need to be frost-proof and own a park. In Ireland or Spain, even though it's warm in Spain, you need to be priest-proof as well. Most parts of the USA should count their blessings in this regard. What is odd is that they don't do more about garden design. The walled or hedged gardens of Europe are nearly all practicable, at least by night.

Outdoor locations in wild areas are often flawed by vermin, ranging from ants and mosquitoes to snakes and officious cops. Nevertheless, respect flora and fauna. Don't ejaculate – or anything else – without clearing up after yourself, and never in natural water sources. Also remember that discarded condoms can kill the wildlife.

Surface-wise, the best venue is often sand dunes, which give shelter and keep the heat, besides not harboring stinging insects. Lawn grass is fine if well screened. The safest cover, if you intend to strip right off, is the thicket standing on its own, where you can see out, but they can't see in; the "bower" of Fontainebleau painters. Europeans, who live in crowded landscapes, are adept at quick dressing and using places such as Hampstead Heath and the Prater.

With so many landscape opportunities to choose from, there should be no problem finding somewhere appropriate – if you do take risks, however, cultivate the quick getaway; danger turns some people on, and others, of both sexes, right off. Enthusiastic larks one gets lost in, like stripping right off or tying each other to trees, call for very remote areas or a walled garden.

Even more crucially, check out local customs and laws, particularly religious mores, and be respectful of them – otherwise you risk both offending local feeling and incurring serious penalties. The many ethical systems in the world view sexual display in different ways, and an affectionate kiss, in some countries, is a deadly insult to deeply held beliefs. A flat roof at night is a standard Eastern venue – you can make love and see the whole city.



remote control

It's an old story that you can seduce a complete novice, who has no idea what you mean, by slipping a thumb into a closed fist, or between your lips, and absent-mindedly moving it in and out, in and out. Frankly, however, most people this works on know very well what it's all about.

The lip one works better, nail downwards in the appropriate rhythm – she will feel it where she should. She can do the same “at” him, for example in eating. Once habituated to either of these signals, most women and some men can be radio-controlled as to excitement, erection, and even orgasm – even by rubbing the lobe of one's ear – from several places down a table, the opposite side of a room, or the opposite box at a theater. One very humorous use of this was when the lady was dancing with someone else, who spotted what was going on in his arms and thought he was the source of the signals – which actually came from her lover, who was sitting out.

Nowadays, more literal and technological remote control, prefigured by the Pleasure Machine in *Barbarella* and the Orgasmatron in *Sleeper*, is an everyday reality: vibrators triggered by mobile phone, teledildonics for Internet pleasuring, and so on. Given the distance at which some people now have to conduct relationships, it's more than likely just the beginning.

voyeurs

Title to be kept for those who treat sex as a non-playing spectator sport. Any active player is likely to be fascinated to watch their game being played, provided the players themselves are worth watching. Real couples are doubtless worth watching – the bored, semi-erect participants in blue movies, on the other hand, seldom merit the trouble. Real human mating behavior is as interesting as that of the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, and far more instructive.

Nowadays, however, the opportunity to watch real couples in the flesh is unusual – we keep our sex behind closed shutters. Those shutters are opened now and again via webcam coverage on “real sex” websites, as well as sexual acts in semi-public places performed for the delectation of passers-by (termed “dogging,” derived from the euphemism, “Just going out to walk the dog, dear”). These, though often illegal, at least contain some degree of genuine passion.

Shutters may be necessary, for the protection of individuals as well as in the interests of social comfort. But we lose a lot in this society by not being in the habit of making love in company. If we did, fewer books such as this one would need to be written.

erotica



erotica

a help in raising the level of feeling to bed point

In the first edition of this book, the equivalent section was entitled “pornography,” and the opening sentence was “Name given to any sexual literature someone is trying to suppress.” Times have changed: what was suppressed in 1972 has now been renamed erotica and is available on the middle rather than the top shelf. The worldwide sex industry sales for 2006 were reported to be \$97 billion, twice the sales of Microsoft, and targeted at both sexes.

There are still, however, some things that are unacceptable and rightly so: violent, degrading, or exploitative materials should form no part of one's repertoire and real lovers will surely join us in condemning them. Equally objectionable is when sexual material means that one partner loses confidence, or loses attention for the other, though recent research suggests that erotica use is often a symptom of depression, and thus may need treatment rather than divorce. When a spouse has no energy for post-work conversation then disappears and spends six hours surfing the net, what may need to be put on the table is what underlying mental problems have meant that for him (or her) surfing has become more attractive than love or life.

More positively, if used in context and with consensus, erotica strengthens the love bond. Depiction of any of the range of sex behaviors we describe helps people to visualize them, which is why this book is illustrated. Straight couples can use erotica constructively in the exact proportion that it's well done; that is, it describes feasible, acceptable, and pleasurable activities they would enjoy, or fantasies that, though not feasible, turn them on. Many people find sex books a real help in raising the level of feeling to bed point. She says: "Don't see erotica as a rival but as an ally; making it part of what you do will be much more likely to proof your relationship against the danger of its taking over."

First, however, choose your erotica. It isn't true that only men are turned on by sexual material; it is true that women are most turned on by it if it's written with sensitivity and an awareness of other than male feelings. Plus remember that much erotica is so idealized that it can provoke inferiority complexes on both sides; choose with an eye to self-esteem as well as arousal, or the arousal may be non-existent.

Here are some classics: the *Kama Sutra* and *The Perfumed Garden* for traditional ideas; Nancy Friday's *My Secret Garden* for a modern view; Anaïs Nin's *Delta of Venus* and Pauline Réage's *Story of O* for something more edgy. As for films, mainstream sensuality may actually be more effective than videoshop raunch, at least for her: Sharon Stone riding Michael Douglas in *Basic Instinct*; Julie Christie and Donald Sutherland making married love in *Don't Look Now*. You will have your own favorites.

You can, of course, create your own erotica to express your fantasies for private use between you. If photographing or videoing, it will help for her (and even him) to wear makeup, and to place the lights and camera above the action for flattering angles. (It will also reassure to have just one copy of any shots, jointly held – and ritually destroyed if you part.)

Many respected writers and artists, Rodin among them, created their own erotica, even if they didn't publish the results – or not under their own names. It's one way of dealing with what you can't, or wouldn't wish, to do in fact – a kind of accessory to dreams and play. If you can't think what to write, begin by describing the best lovemaking session the two of you have ever had – or would liked to have had ([see fantasy](#)).

sex shops

As with “pornography,” recently subject to a dramatic rehabilitation. Once viewed as immoral and hidden away in back alleys, now there is a sex shop on most main streets, and Web searching yields up two and a half million hits; selling sex products is utterly standard and none the worse for that. The best outlets offer information sheets, help lines, online support, and sex workshops, and productively supplement sex education and therapy.

Still, use with care. If product descriptions sound too good to be true, they usually are; despite claims, there are currently no potions that increase breast or penis size and no gadgets that guarantee erection or orgasm – there were, it would be headline news. Equally, be wary of stores that buy into the most worrying kind of sexual stereotypes, suggesting that he should always be ready for sex or she should be grateful for it. Not a good ethos.

Hence, first browse online – even retail stores have Web presence – until you find a site that not only offers the products you want but also reflects the way you view lovemaking, and the way you want to be viewed as a customer. Test out by placing a phone enquiry about policy to see if you are treated courteously and efficiently.

Where a firm does have a retail store, go there, if possible together; it’s only by testing that you can really know whether something works for (both of) you. Embarrassment may seem a problem, but the salespeople have – truly – seen it all and are highly motivated to put customers at ease so that they get their commission and keep their job. If they come on too strong, simply tell them to back off; if you need advice, invite them over. Taking the time to browse, ask questions, and literally play will get much better results than a head-down, no-eye-contact dash in and out.

les anneaux

The more sensitive French term for erection maintainers; where they work, they can effectively better intercourse by stiffening a partial erection – this is achieved by slightly blocking off the veins of the penis at its root to keep the hydraulics working.

The Chinese and Japanese bound thin leather around the whole penis, or its base, and the Japanese favored openwork tubes fitted over the whole thing – in each case, pressure at the base plus roughening of the shaft and pubic area create the effect. Modern models typically come in rubber or plastic and fit around the base of the shaft; some have a clitoris tickler to supplement the man's pubic bone, or extensions to stimulate testicles, perineum, or anus. You can add vibration, with or without remote control.

None of these things are surefire erection devices, and most only work at all in the absence of any impotence anxieties. One, the Blakoe ring, goes around both penis and scrotum root (it opens and clips shut) to maintain agreeable erotic sensations and hence boost morale. Some lovers use a turn of cord instead; this can lead on to elaborate “cockties” that compress the root, separate the testes, and hold the penis in a bent-double position, giving a sensation rather like continuous suction.

Care is needed, though. Don't bruise the urethra by over-tightening, or leave on too long (twenty minutes is more than enough), don't fall asleep, and don't use at all if he has circulation or nerve problems, is diabetic, or is taking any form of anticoagulant or blood-thinning medication including aspirin. Metal rings frequently have to be removed in the emergency room when they get stuck on an erection. One owner set off an airport metal detector; he told officials it was an article of his religious faith.

inflators

Originally the medically prescribed answer of choice for erectile problems, the penis pump is still advised in cases where the “little blue pill” and its like can’t help. Useful in that context, but as a pleasure toy sold through sex shops can hold out false promises. Ignore all claims of permanent increase in size. Plus the dangers of overuse are real, so go gently, pause often, follow instructions, and make sure the model you buy has a vacuum limiter.

Be very wary of DIY. Writers may explore the use of household appliances for sex kicks, but you should never fool about with vacuum cleaners or such. A garage tire inflator line ruptured the intestine when squirted a short distance from someone’s anus in a practical joke. Vacuum cleaner injuries of the penis are surprisingly common and very hard to repair satisfactorily.

penis extensions

These fit or strap over the real thing. Penis size, it can't be repeated too often, has little to do with sexual feeling, though a big one may be emotionally stimulating in prospect (see [size](#)). A large, hard extension can do actual damage, so go carefully. The most these do is to boost male morale; though, like a chest wig, one wouldn't like to be found using one.

karezza

The Alice Stockham treatment – going on and on and on while controlling orgasm. The pioneering nineteenth-century gynecologist wasn't advocating this as a cure for hair-trigger trouble, however, nor as a means of halting male climax, but to encourage lengthy lovemaking and couple tenderness. Developed to cure failing marriage and women's inequality; he was discouraged from simply thrusting and climaxing, while both were encouraged to take long, loving pauses. The word *karezza* means "to caress."

Not to be confused with the old Tantric–Taoist system of ejaculatory control, which held that semen was spiritual gasoline – the man should be careful to conserve it while drawing "virtue" from the woman. One ejaculation could dissipate this supposed virtue. Accordingly, a great many sexual yogic positions in which movement was difficult were designed specifically for this kind of maneuver – giving the woman several orgasms, while the man either had none or had one without ejaculating, conserved his semen, and performed what was, in fact, a meditative sexual exercise. Adept yogis also trained themselves to ejaculate internally – an unrewarding technique that deposits the semen in the bladder, whence it is passed with the urine: occasionally, the same trick appears spontaneously as a disability and is difficult to unlearn. This explains the low male-satisfaction value of many of the most elaborate Hindu positions. If you intend to use intercourse as a meditative technique, you may well want to experiment, but steer clear of blocking ejaculation entirely.

Philosophically midway between Stockham and the mystics comes the Oneida community, which advised lengthy lovemaking along with male continence: it also kept conceptions down, albeit not over-reliably, as semen can leak without ejaculation. There was allegedly an offbeat French priest who canvassed the same idea, as an answer to Vatican scruples over birth control, under the title of *continence conjugale (coitus reservatus)*, but the idea failed to catch on. The method requires total control of male movement – allowing the woman internal movements only, and the man sufficient strokes to maintain erection, stopping as soon as tension mounts.

For occasional bouts of extended pleasure with the emphasis on couple bonding, use the original Stockham approach of slow and gentle with pauses; as you reach the plateau ([see plateau phase](#)), switch to full movement and mutual orgasm, for which the woman will be fully ready.

ligottage

Bondage, or as the French call it, *ligottage*, is the gentle art of tying up your sex partner – not to overcome reluctance, but to boost orgasm. It's one unscheduled sex technique that a lot of people find extremely exciting and a venerable human resource for increasing sexual feeling; a slow orgasm when unable to move is a mind-blowing experience for anyone not too frightened of their own emotions to try it.

“Any restraint upon muscular and emotional activity generally,” wrote late-nineteenth-century doctor Havelock Ellis, “tends to heighten the state of sexual excitement.” Men and women have always been excited anyhow by the idea of getting the better of each other, and “erotic bondage” was always a popular turn-on – every self-respecting folk heroine and most folk heroes have to be bound hand and foot periodically so they can be rescued.

Fantasies of the same sort have a big erotic literature (most of it wildly unpracticable and meant to be seen, not felt), which can act as a substitute for people who need to be able to lie back and enjoy without guilt. Most of us have traces of these needs, and like to “dominate” each other symbolically at times, or be dominated (no offense to anyone's sexual politics, because this need is mutual). We all, even in the mildest forms of lovemaking, take responsibility for the other's sexual pleasure or hand over responsibility for ours; variations like this are simply extensions of the trend. Aficionados call it “power exchange.”

Bondage games are a good starting point for exploring this arena; they take a little learning (first efforts are often painful, or come adrift, or waste an erection messing around), but with speed and skill, many unlikely people swear by them as an occasional – if only because really professional slow masturbation isn't possible unless the subject is securely tied (*see* [slow masturbation](#)).

Many women enjoy the helplessness and temporary exaggeration of being controlled, but bondage is an even better dodge for her to use on him: he gets the mind-blowing sensation of “becoming one enormous penis,” plus withdrawal of all performance anxiety – she gets the opportunity to be in total control of the pace and character of arousal, possibly for the first time. Part of the popularity of this kind of sexual play lies in exorcizing each partner's fear of control by the other by turning it into a source of increased physical sensation. Each enjoys the other's pretend fierceness. True fierceness, male or female, doesn't fit with the enactment; dedicated players may go to the extremes of hoods, body bags, mummification, but they never act cruelly or unilaterally (*see* [hazards](#)). One way to guarantee it all stays a game is a strict insistence on equal turns.

In fact, really skillful bondage works like a bomb, sexually, on most non-timid males, both on the giving and the receiving end (as with any trick that involves both stimulation and symbolism, a well-tied sexual “prisoner” both looks and feels sexy) – and on a fair proportion of women once they get the idea. Eventual responders of both sexes can require a lot of gentle preparation if they are scared by the symbolism, but

this kind of fantasy only frightens people whose idea of tenderness is over-tender. Some people sense the need to be “overpowered” sometimes. Others are into the domination symbol and like to be aggressors from the start.

The idea is to tie your partner hand and foot, firmly but comfortably, so that they can struggle as hard as they like without getting loose, and then bring them to orgasm ([see rope work](#)). Apart from being a wild sexual sensation, it enables many people who couldn't otherwise do so to let go to the last degree. They may yell blue murder at the critical moment, but love it (one important skill here is to distinguish the noises that mean real distress – kinked wrists, cramp, or the like – from the normal protests of ecstasy: the first mean “stop at once,” the second “for God's sake go on and finish me off”).

Games of this sort are an occasional optional extra to all sorts of sex-play and intercourse, since the tied partner can be kissed, masturbated, ridden, or simply teased to orgasm, but they go extra well in both sexes with the unbearably sharp sensations produced by slow, skillful hand work. “Restraint” gives the receiving partner something muscular to do while remaining quite helpless to influence the march of events, or the rhythm and speed of stimulation (what psychoanalyst Theodor Reik called the “suspense factor”), and enables the active partner to push the woman, at least, to unbearable lengths (she, when her turn comes, can drive him frantic by spinning things out).

blindfold



blindfold

waft scents, offer tastes, whisper fantasies

A deprivation tool, focusing attention on four senses because one is blocked; if you are tempted to think too much, this will neatly short-circuit the temptation. Traditionally, central to power exchange sex (see [ligottage](#)); blindfolded, you don't know what's about to happen and this alone can tip some women into an orgasm. Essential is trust; never blindfold without warning or negotiation, and once blindfolded never inflict an unpleasant surprise or you will ruin more than just the moment.

A light scarf or a long-haul-flight sleep mask will act as a symbolic blindfold, but for true darkness, source a thicker one from a sex shop. With a novice, keep reassuring hands-on touch and tell them what you are doing; with a non-novice, you can raise the anxiety level with extended silences and temporary withdrawal of contact. Waft scents, offer tastes, whisper fantasies. The master sensory channel, however, is touch, administered unpredictably: move silently and slowly so there are no betraying cues. Use mouth and genitals, but also feathers, sex toys, ice, tingle creams. When the blindfold comes off, expect disorientation – time for close, safe embrace.

At the other extreme is deep eye contact; in one academic experiment a randomly allocated pair of strangers who held just four minutes' eye contact fell in love. Use your eyes not only to create a bond pre-sex, but also to hammer home the intensity during lovemaking. Keeping your eyes open during orgasm can feel almost overwhelmingly intimate.

chains

The tied-up, tinkling look – they show well on naked skin. Some women like both the coldness and the symbolism, and some men spend hours locking and unlocking them – both should try them on each other for size. Uncomfortable and only symbolically effective if you want actually to hold a partner still, but they look fierce, and some find them exciting. Bright tinkling objects turn on people as well as magpies (see [earlobes](#)).

harness

Quick “restraint” system for people who can’t tie knots, who bruise with rope, or who like the look of “apparatus.” Comes in all degrees of complication and for all postures – watch out for expensive confections that are really props for soft-core porn photos. Mainstay of fetish boutiques. Gives very tight restraint and a lot of skin pressure. Some play up the horse symbolism.

gags

Some energetic people like to be gagged. As one lady put it, “it keeps the bubbles in the champagne.” Gagging and being gagged turns many on and the expression of erotic astonishment on the face of a well-gagged partner when they find they can only mew is irresistible to most. Apart from the symbolism and the “feeling of helplessness,” it enables the subject to yell and bite during orgasm, which helps a total cut-loose, unless you have a rhinoceros hide and live in a soundproof room. It makes prompting impossible, so that your partner’s initiatives are outside your control. Most men who are excited by this sort of game like to be silenced thoroughly. Untimid women often come to like it after a few tries if they are the biting kind or like the feeling of helplessness – others hate it and lose their orgasm; if so, don’t even try. A few like to be blindfolded as well, or instead.

It’s hard to gag anyone so they are 100 percent quiet except in movies, where a wisp of silk over the heroine’s face enables the hero to walk past without hearing her. A long piece of cloth, with several turns well between the teeth, or the sex shop rubber ball centrally fixed in a narrow strap, is quite fierce enough. Adhesive tape will work, but is torture to take off.

The prisoner must never be made incapable of signaling if anything is wrong. Anything in the mouth must be firm, mustn’t block breathing, and must be quick-release in case the subject signals danger – from choking, feeling sick, or any other source of discomfort; best not to use at all if the subject has any condition that affects breathing. The “stop signal” must be agreed beforehand and never abused or ignored (see [hazards](#)). Penalty for illicit use, two further orgasms.

ropework



ropework

the right mix here is tough plus tender

To make *ligottage* work as a game, it obviously needs to be effective but not painful or dangerous. So technique is worth a few words, because some skill and care are called for.

On any bed with four posts you can stake a partner out, supported by one or more pillows. Extension like this inhibits orgasm in some people – many feel more with the legs open, but the wrists and elbows firmly behind the back, or by being tied to a chair, or upright to a post. The critical areas where compression boosts sex feeling are the wrists, ankles, elbows (don't try to make them meet behind by brute force), soles of the feet, thumbs, and big toes (artful partners break off halfway to tie these last two with a leather bootlace – if you doubt this, try it). The Japanese take this further, making rope work an art form; if it appeals, surf the Internet for full instructions.

There are divergences of taste over what to use for tying. Leaving aside extremes like straitjackets, different couples use leather or rubber straps, ribbons, cloth strips, pajama cords, bondage tape, Velcro fastenings, or thick, soft rope. Straps are easiest for those who aren't very strong, or can't tie reef knots; they need holes at intervals. Handcuffs may hurt to lie on, but can be removed fastest; for safety's sake carry them closed, and for heaven's sake keep the keys within reach. For most couples a hank of cotton

clothesline is fine. Cut it into five or six lengths of about 4 feet and a couple of about 6 feet, and use a lot of hand-tight turns. Put rope through the washing machine with softener before use.

Bondage can be played without any of the props and simply for the symbolism: instructing the unbound other to lie still and “bear” whatever you are doing can have spectacular results as they struggle to reconcile the desire to respond and the contradictory injunction. On the other hand, usually at least half the payoff in people who enjoy it (and there are many) is, for the person tied, directly physical – in struggling against restraint and in skin and muscle feeling. It also helps get over our cultural taboo on intense extragenital sensations, which belongs in the same package.

Rope marks usually go in a few hours if you have been gentle. Rope burns and bruises come from clumsy untying – don’t saw through the skin, but be quick so that the man doesn’t get stiff through being left tied after orgasm, and the woman comes down to earth lying comfortably in your arms. You can be agreeably, adequately, and symbolically fierce, whichever your sex, without being spiteful or clumsy and wrecking things (see [hazards](#)).

The right mix here, as in all sex games, is tough plus tender. If you can’t sense how tough your partner likes it, ask, then subtract at least 20 percent to allow for the difference between fact and fantasy. Given these rules, any couple who enjoys forceful lovemaking and likes the idea could do worse than learn to make each other helpless occasionally, gently, quickly, and efficiently. This is neither weird nor frightening – just human. For the pièce de résistance that goes with bondage, namely [slow masturbation](#), go to that section.

hazards

Gourmet lovemaking doesn't necessarily mean loving to the limit, but it can. Either through wanting more, or through losing track, or through wanting more and losing track, both parties may find themselves doing things on the edge of hazardous. Hence, a "safety code" should be observed. This is as follows:

- Start slow; negotiate in advance. If you can't talk about it, don't do it. Never do – or have done to you – anything that undermines your self-confidence. Never mix sex with drugs, frustration, anger, or excess alcohol.
- Practice safe sex unless tested (*see* [safe sex](#)) and always with anal play. Even if tested, avoid infections by cultivating cleanliness and following a rigorous policy of not putting body parts or sex toys near the anus, then near or in other body orifices.
- Decide on a "safe word," one you don't normally use and that can't be confused with cries for more; "amber" for "carry on but go more slowly please," "red" for "stop right now." If gagged, arrange a wordless gesture such as holding a marble that, when dropped, signals stop.
- Restrain kindly and check regularly. Nobody helpless, physically or emotionally, should be left alone, even briefly, especially facedown or in proximity to soft bedding. Don't leave a partner tied up and go to sleep, especially if you have been drinking. Don't keep anyone tied up longer than half an hour. All knots should be quick-release (*see* [rope work](#)).
- Never block a partner's airway. Nothing loose or soft, or in general other than specified, may be put into anyone's mouth or over their face. Never tie anything around the front of anybody's neck, even loosely or if they ask for it. All gags should be quick-release (*see* [gags](#)).
- Never throttle anyone, especially in orgasm. Those who treat partial strangulation as a kick can get exactly the same sensation safely by intercourse head-down (*see* [breathing](#), and [inversion](#)).
- Never apply force where bones, veins, or arteries are close to the surface. Test all tools on oneself first, and never apply force harder than will make a slight indentation on the skin. Clamps should never be left on for more than fifteen minutes (*see* [nipples](#), and [pain](#)).
- Never blow into the vagina. This can cause an air embolism and sudden death. Equally, water under pressure should never be directed forcibly into the vagina – it can

go up the Fallopian tubes and do harm.

- Avoid cruelty of any sort, doing anything to someone who is really scared of the idea, or idiot tricks like hanging people up by any part of their anatomy. Do nothing that is not safe, sane, and consensual.

Considering the range of sexual experimentation, however, only manifestly idiotic experiments are dangerous. Given reasonable gentleness, sex-play is by far the safest energetic sport – one can be killed dead by a golf ball.

merkins

Vagina substitutes – traditionally a warm-water container with a rubber or plastic vagina. They now come in many pulsating varieties, offer alternative orifice options, and may even be modeled on celebrity genitals. Attached to an inflatable plastic doll or not, their utility is doubtful – there is no substitute for what they attempt to replace and, like the traditional hole in a watermelon, the only excuse for using a merkin in two-way sex is if the sight of it in use excites your partner.

dildoes

Dildoes are artificial penises of varying sophistication (some are shaped for the G-spot, others are made from steel and can be heated or cooled). These go back to the most ancient times and have many takers – the modern ones have excellent texture. Most women don't naturally masturbate by vaginal insertion, but since reputedly the ladies of the Turkish harem “were not suffered a radish or cucumber to their diet except it be first sliced,” some, with sexual experience, evidently do – and the sight of a woman using one is clearly a turn-on for some males. They can also provide a second penis for simultaneous use. Harnesses or double-ended dildoes are no longer just for woman-woman relations, but allow role-play if she wants to experience what it's like to have a penis, or he wants to know what it's like to be penetrated (*see [postillionage](#)*). Choose for preferred shape and size – if he is choosing for her, he should go smaller than he thinks she will need. Men usually over-achieve here.

vibrators



vibrators

some men will climax with just a touch

Contrary to myth, not an embarrassing aid for the lonely or inexperienced, but vital for both solo and couple sex. They come in several varieties – penile, clitoral, G-spot, anal, egg-shaped, double, handbag-sized, fingertip, cock ring, strap-on, slip-down-your-knickers, and so on – not counting the kits that transform your cell phone or music system. Some people simply don't respond, others think vibrators desensitize or make the user dependent – but if wanted or liked, a solid relationship can surely incorporate, rather than feel threatened by, sex toys, vibrators included.

To see if they work for you, an electric toothbrush (with unused head) can act as a nursery-slope run; useful too if one forgets to pack the vibrator. Once you know what you want, visit a sex shop; the protocol for testing intensity and speed is against your

nose or palm (*see* [sex shops](#)). Think about what you will be using it for and choose accordingly: G-spot vibes are curved, anal are flared so they don't disappear inside. Shape is mostly a red herring – it's the vibration not the structure that has the effect – and while he may automatically choose penis-shaped, she usually gets more benefit from a form she can easily hold and apply. If she wants to insert the device, she should check the manufacturer's instructions, since some aren't suitable. Low-speed silicone is quieter, but any can be muffled by a pillow held at groin level. Some materials can cause allergies and hormone disruption; a good sex shop can advise on current developments.

Care and maintenance: the same as for any sex toy – clean before and after, add lubrication for ease (*see* [lubrication](#)), use a condom if sharing with an untested friend (*see* [safe sex](#)). Rules for use: really none – if it feels good and isn't painful, continue to do it. Incorporate into the ritual of skin stimulation, then home in on lips, nipples, bottom cheeks, and the small of the back on either side of the spine before moving onto genitals proper.

Traditionally, the vibrator is her instrument – she can use it to show him what she needs, or to take her first orgasm solo as a warm-up. Holding the vibrator firmly against her closed labia, then opening so that it can press against her U-spot (*see* [trigger points](#)) and nudge against her vagina. However, the stimulation of choice with a vibrator is customarily her clitoris; she may need to start slowly if the stimulation is too much (choose a low speed or pad with a towel), then press in more firmly just behind the head. If he is working on her, he needs to know what to do at orgasm – some women need continuing stimulation, but for many the relentlessness of the vibrator against the swollen clitoris is too much; he will need to lift off slightly (or completely, then move in quickly to take her through with his tongue).

Despite tradition, it should be added that there are just as many possibilities for him. Testicles (gently), the underside of his penis, the perineum. In particular, the glans and the frenulum; some men will climax here with just a touch, or she can give him oral sex, flicking the frenulum with her tongue while holding the vibrator against her cheek to add extra hum. Or he can wear a ring vibrator – which fits at the base of the penis – with striking results for both players.

Combinations: one vibrator plus hand and mouth work; more than one vibrator; a multipurpose that penetrates vagina and nudges clitoris at the same time. Try an egg vibrator in her vagina with him using another on her clitoris. Vary this with anal penetration plus clitoral or glans stimulation. Work together, with him operating vibrators in her vagina and anus, while she uses a fingertip one between her legs – or he brings himself off while she applies the vibrator (*see* [postillionage](#)).

Remote control adds a whole new dimension, not just for public game-playing (both in a restaurant, one of you wearing the vibrator, the other holding the controls), but in the bedroom, where one of you unilaterally determines the pace; the other may need to be pinned down (*see* [slow masturbation](#)).

A final amusing factoid. Vibrators are not an invention of the sexual revolution, but were originally developed in 1869 to enable doctors or midwives to treat “hysterical women” by allowing them clitoral climaxes. Called shoulder massagers, they were

apparently the fifth electrical appliance to be introduced to the home. For medicinal purposes only, of course.

pain

Pain isn't a sexual excitant per se. What actually happens is that once excitement starts to build, endorphins flow, and pain awareness is reduced steadily until any strongish stimulus, even one that normally would be over-strong, adds to the buildup. This can be true elsewhere – you can lose a tooth in a sports game and not notice it until after – but with sexual excitement, the pain stimulus can actually be transformed into, or at least boost, pleasure feeling, provided it isn't too strong.

There is a sharp point, however, at which overstimulation becomes a turnoff, not a turn-on, and if this is overstepped, the buildup collapses. Tolerance increases the closer you get to orgasm – just before climax people can take, for example, quite hard spanking – but the transformation stops as soon as orgasm occurs, so don't continue awkward postures or hard stimuli after this. Some people don't transform at all. If anything you do is perceived as straight untransformed pain, it's either too much or too early on, or you have gone on after orgasm. Learning what stimuli are pleasant as buildup and what aren't is an art. Making sure you follow the safety rules, on the other hand, is a necessity (see [hazards](#)).

If any part of normal sex actually hurts, due to soreness, internal organs getting knocked, and so on, you are being clumsy or something is wrong – in the second case, see a doctor if it lasts more than a few days. First coitus – or coitus after a period of celibacy – can be slightly painful for both parties; if they are excited enough beforehand, lubrication and the transformation effect will get most through the pain barrier, though if she is sore or bleeds at all, give time for abrasions to heal before the next round. If a medical condition or a disability makes sex painful, experiment with positions and consider warm baths, massage, and strategically applied remedial painkillers to get you through.

Actual craving for pain (mental or physical) as a sex kick isn't uncommon. Often, the idea is exciting in fantasy, but a turnoff in practice, unless the active partner is skilled enough to keep inside the limits of transformation by excitement, and the fantasy itself isn't too extreme. Many men who have persuaded a partner to “beat them hard” because the idea sounded exciting have been put off a repeat performance. If your partner has such fantasies, keep well inside their powers of stimulus transformation and subtract a good 20 percent from the fantasy. For most people, common sense, a bit of playacting, and intelligent use of the transformation effect can more than take care of the normal fantasy range.

If you want to move outside that range, it's outside the scope of this book; read one of the classic works on the subject such as *Screw the Roses, Send Me the Thorns* (see [this page](#)) and learn the game by consulting, or pairing with, experienced players.

discipline



discipline

some people are wildly turned on by it

Code word for beating each other as a sexual technique. There is a venerable superstition, starting among English private-school scholars and backed by literature from Meibom's *De Usu Flagrorum*, that beating is a sort of sexual Tabasco, the hottest erotic condiment, and no wild party is complete without it. Some of this is due to the fact that specialists in this field haven't suffered under the handicaps that affected, say, *soixante-neuf* or straight sex – beating is decent and can even be done in church; sex

isn't.

Beating is a turn-on that either works or doesn't. Quite apart from fantasists and talkers who are far more excited by the idea than the actual performance, some people are wildly turned on by it. For others, who have a real problem here, it may be necessary as a self-starter. Skin stimulation and the occasional spank at the right moment fit well into most people's repertoire. Most find that anything more is disappointing in proportion to the scale of the performance. If you are lovers and one of you wants to be on the receiving end, the other need not be scared that they will let out the beast in themselves by cooperating. If one of you wants to beat the other and he or she doesn't like it, or is turned off by the idea, that's non-negotiable – it surely doesn't need saying that all this should not be confused with abuse.

This is a clear case where if you can't communicate fantasies, you should not be lovers. Play it through a few times in words during straight intercourse (see [birdsong at morning](#)). When you try it in practice, if it's the ritual that's the exciting part, make that big – don't be ashamed to ask for this, or give it: play matters. It can be a naughty child or a mistress-and-slave routine or whatever – if your partner's fantasy doesn't turn you on naturally, play it as a game and enjoy his or her response. If it's the physical sensation, rhythm and style apparently matter far more than force.

Start gently at around one blow in one or two seconds, not more. Allow the transformation effect to kick in (see [pain](#)) before going full pelt, then gradually build up force until it's enough to make your subject want and not want you to stop. For two-way traffic, the result, plus struggling, should both look and feel sexy, not cruel. Never break the skin, and never beat neck, spine, or anywhere bony; stick to the buttocks or cover the whole surface – back, belly, and, if very lightly, breasts, penis (careful!), and vulva (put her on her back with her feet attached to the bedposts above her head, legs wide open; start on the buttocks, then give one light switch or two upon her thighs and vulva to finish her off). Or tie the victim's hands overhead to the shower nozzle and work them over under running water.

Traditional birch twigs are tricky to source, but sex shops offer whips and paddles that make a great noise but do no mischief; try them on yourself before using them on a partner and even then accept their judgment on what's hard and what's too hard. Or simply use your hand; a cupped palm will sound forceful yet create little pain, while an open flat palm will sting; apply an ice cube afterwards. Don't use bamboo – it cuts like a knife. Don't play this game with strangers, ever. Lovers have enough feedback not to let the most violent play go sour. And never mix purely erotic beating with real anger or bad temper (see [hazards](#)). A game is a game is a game.

foursomes and moresomes

When this book was first written, the idea of open sexual relationships with multiple partners was described as “an important anthropological resource ... becoming socially more easy to arrange.” When the book was next reissued, the AIDS epidemic had taken hold and the same behavior was described as “suicidal.” Nowadays, both sets of comments would be seen as extreme, but in general, society backs the norm of private sex between two partners, anything else being regarded as an exciting adventure, an act of folly, or a total betrayal.

In the context of couples, there is often lopsided motivation. One wants to and suggests it; the other says yes so as not to displease; in short order, jealousy creeps in, then the whole thing implodes. There is a good deal to be said for keeping it all in the realm of fantasy; if you go further, negotiate, build in opt-out clauses, and even so expect complications. It is, however, one of the most popular fantasies for both sexes and its advocates claim it sidesteps the deceit that standard infidelity involves. (The idea of free love that involves group orgies, on the other hand, is a different issue, usually an attempt either at social anarchy or “rooster in the hen house” syndrome.)

The “how to” varies from culture to culture and person to person. Most routes, however, can be found on the Internet with judicious searching: private ads from singles and couples wishing to make various formations; sex parties arranged locally; swingers’ clubs with themed nights. Be a single male and you will be in a huge majority and have a hard time being accepted; be a single female and you will be in a huge minority and need to fend off the takers. Couples who have negotiated the rules between them often fare better than either variety of single, as they are able – quite literally – to hold each other’s hands.

If answering a personal ad, follow all the usual rules of dating: reply to those people you like, courteously brush off those you don’t; have phone contact; meet for drinks; if attracted, discuss the ground rules and make a further arrangement. Aim for a sensuous evening at someone’s home, maybe with a meal, then shared nakedness, talk, relaxation, and no expectation of sex unless it feels right for all parties. Follow the safety guidelines (see [technology](#)).

If at an organized party or club, first check out the website – most back up the contact sections with information pages on what the deal is and suggest the easiest nights for novices to attend. You can also ask to talk to established members and get some idea of the unwritten “rules” for watching, touching, joining in. Beforehand, avoid getting courage from alcohol – it’s usually discouraged and will impair your judgment. Many such parties are in private homes and the evening may be structured, with different rooms allocated to different activities; clubs are the same but on a bigger scale with more facilities – perhaps couples’ rooms, private salons, a sauna and Jacuzzi, group space, and so on. If you want to participate, the usual protocol is to sit close to an active couple or group, appear interested, but wait to be invited in. As with all these activities, no means no, and safe sex should be non-negotiable.

We include these guidelines as brief indicators of what to expect; as with all satisfaction, quality varies and you may need to shop around in order to find situations – and indeed personalities – that suit your tastes. But most people who indulge are welcoming to newcomers and eager to help you learn. If they aren't, find new and more amenable playmates.

slow masturbation for him



slow masturbation for him

the most mind-blowing sensation of which males are capable

To make this work, you need to know how to tie your partner (see [rope work](#)) and to have a partner who likes struggling against resistance, but it works for a great many people. Traditionally, the woman does it to the man, but it plays in either direction. You need good access and a completely helpless partner, though you can try it without if bondage turns you off, but the result is quite different and you can't get so far. The knack lies in playing on your partner like an instrument, alternately pushing them forward and frustrating them (*compare* [relaxation](#)).

The woman starts by tying the man to her satisfaction, either staked out, or wrists behind and ankles crossed, knees open, naked, and on his back. She then “signs her name” (*le coup de* [cassolette](#)). To do this, she kneels astride him, facing him, and performs a tasteful striptease as far as her panties. Next, holding his hair in her hand,

she rubs her armpit and breasts firmly over his mouth, giving him her body perfume. Then she locks her legs carefully around his neck and presses her covered pussy on his mouth. Finally, she strips off her panties and gives him the direct genital kiss (brushing first, then open, taking her time over it), pulls his foreskin well back, if he has one, and stands back for a few moments to let him get excited. If she knows her job, he will be unable to move, while the kiss ensures that he won't lose the feel of her. Coming back she does the same all over again, stiffens him by hand and mouth if necessary, and starts in real earnest.

She has two focal points to attend to, his mouth and his penis, and the knack, during this warm-up period, consists in keeping both occupied continuously and without triggering ejaculation. The possibilities are obvious – hand to each; hand to one, mouth or pussy to the other; varied by a touch of her breasts, her armpit, or even her hair. Between the two poles she will work over his most sensitive areas with her fingertips (*see [pattes d'araignée](#)*), her tongue, and her pussy – this last with one hand on his penis and other palm over his mouth, never letting the rhythm slacken. If his erection begins to go down, she stops, tightens him up (the moment for thumb-tying if she is strong enough to turn him easily – *see [rope work](#)*), then re-stiffens him. She can now begin slow masturbation proper.

This is about the most mind-blowing (and, while it lasts, frustrating) sexual sensation of which most males are capable. (If you still want to know why we say start by tying your lover, try it for a few moments with an unbound partner.) She sits well up on his chest, with her buttocks to his chin, and puts each of her ankles inside the crook of one of his knees, or sits with her knees bent and her calves tucked under his arms. She should hold the root of his penis with one hand and with the other pull the skin back as far as it will go with finger and thumb, thumb towards her. Then she starts quick, sharp, nervous strokes – each one quick, that is, but timed at one per second, no faster. After about twenty of these, about ten very quick strokes. Then she resumes the slow rhythm. And so on.

If she thinks he is about to ejaculate (you can sense this with practice), she should drop the speed and keep this up as long as she thinks he can stand it. The excitement is his, but is less one-sided than it sounds; the male response is enough to turn most women on, and she can press her open pussy hard on his breastbone for her own pleasure, though she shouldn't let her attention wander. Ten minutes is as much as most males can stand. If he goes limp, she should put him out of his misery, either by quickly masturbating him to climax, using her mouth, or turning and riding him. When he does come, she needs to get him untied as quickly as possible – delay after orgasm will leave him as stiff as if he had played a hard ball game.

This is the Japanese-massage-special-treatment routine – the only bar is if she is heavy. The Japanese are artists at making their knots, like their dishes, look really nice, and Japanese masseuses are small enough to sit on a man's chest without killing him. If she is large, she can try tying his legs apart and taking the weight on her knees, with her pussy on his mouth: in the story of Brunnhilde, she tied up King Gunther on his wedding night, probably for a similar routine – here we have given the version for

smaller women.

One unexpected trick is for the woman to tell her partner she is going to give him the time of his life, tie him, and then, when she has made sure he can't get loose or make a sound, make him watch while she masturbates to orgasm. This is more exciting for both of them than it sounds. He, if he is already excited and expecting something else, will go berserk, and his useless struggles will turn her on. Afterwards she can make it up to him – slowly.

slow masturbation for her



slow masturbation for her

make her scale another, still higher, range of peaks

The male-to-female version of the trick previously described (see [slow masturbation for him](#)), usually possible only with a woman who is reliable in her orgasm, so she doesn't mind being slowed down or speeded up. The man has three points to concentrate on – mouth, breasts, and clitoris. He should stake her out, then start as she did, with the *coup de [cassolette](#)*, using armpit and glans, and then rub his hand over her *cassolette* and put it over her mouth, to play back her own perfume. He needs to gauge from her sounds and movements how heavy a touch on the clitoris she can stand. He can copy the spinning-out technique and excite her by postponement or he can simply push her as far and as fast as possible. If she is a responsive subject and not frightened of the whole business, the reaction will fully test his skill in securing her. He should kneel astride, but not sit on her, nor hold her down – she should be quite helpless anyway.

Finally, and in the case of experienced lovers this will be when she is semi-conscious, he will switch to a few moments of tongue work for lubrication, then vigorous intercourse and make her scale another, still higher, range of peaks, taking his own orgasm early on. He should know by the feel of her when to stop – this bears no relation

to mewling and struggles, which reach a peak just short of climax. He should then untie her quickly, skilfully, and painlessly so that she comes back to earth lying quietly in his arms.



joy



joy

always have somewhere new to go and something new to aim for

From an evolutionary standpoint, sexual joy has a built-in sell-by date. Humans are hormonally programmed to lust until their genes have combined, then to support each other until the baby is born and self-sufficient, after which the genetic imperative becomes irrelevant. Nature sets no erotic targets for the postpartum couple unless it's to do it again. But surely more than this is possible. Humans are not just a collection of genes, not just a biological drive; we can feel, we can commit, we can love. Given that skill set, we can develop our potential in the sexual arena until we die.

The first step in this development is the determination never to accept mediocre. Sometimes you will both be tempted to settle for the comforting “do this, do that” sort of lovemaking that has always worked in the past and will do so again. This is fine on occasion or in the face of exhaustion, but serious lovers shouldn't be serving up that particular dish regularly. Challenge routines – as a matter of course and as an act of love – and challenge too the belief that you “shouldn't” or “can't” be more sexually daring. There is no such thing as too old, too staid, or too long-term a relationship.

In this regard, sex advisors recommend toys and dressing up; facile-sounding, but there's some truth in it. Anthropologist Helen Fisher points out that novelty triggers

similar brain centers to passion, so by introducing new sexual variations, you replicate old romantic feelings. Acting on initial determination means being regularly willing to adapt foreplay, shift position, try games, set challenges, introduce accessories and props; always have somewhere new to go and something new to aim for. The Japanese had *shunga*, “pillow books” of sexual erotica and fantasy, for when inspiration faded; you could do worse than keep this very book in the bedside cabinet.

Above and beyond the props, however, you need to be willing to acknowledge that you want to do new and different things. The first, imprinting experience of each other’s bodies may have been many years ago, and if you have changed over time – and all of us do – then your needs and tastes will have altered too. What turned you on two, five, or twenty years ago may no longer be what works. Admitting that to yourself and – much more scarily – admitting it to your partner takes courage, since it can stir up insecurities and resistance. But it’s essential; acknowledging new and developing desires, then meeting them for oneself and one’s partner is at the heart of all sexual development. Offering a menu of possibilities to fulfill those desires is at the heart of this book.

If there is one thing that will retain the joy of sex, it’s continuing to say to your partner, “I really want you to ...,” and continuing to respond to your partner with, “Yes ...”

resources

birth control

National Women's Health Resource Center

1-877-986-9472

www.healthywomen.org

A nonprofit independent health information source for women.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA)

1-800-230-PLAN

www.plannedparenthood.org

A women's health-care provider, educator, and advocate.

bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transsexual

The Advocate Guide to Gay Men's Health and Wellness, by Frank Spinelli, M.D. (New York: Alyson Books, 2008).

A comprehensive medical guide for gay men by New York City's "hottest gay doctor."

Anal Pleasure & Health: A Guide for Men and Women, by Jack Morin (San Francisco: Down There Press, 1998).

Though not gay specific, this guide includes gay-related information on having a healthy sex life.

CenterLink (formerly The National Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Centers)

www.lgbtcenters.org

A member-based coalition to support the development of strong, sustainable LGBT community centers.

Fenway Guide to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Health, Harvey J. Makadon, Kenneth H. Mayer, Jennifer Potter, and Hilary Goldhammer, editors (Philadelphia: American College of Physicians, 2007).

Guidance, practical guidelines, and discussions of clinical issues pertinent to the LGBT patient and community.

Gay.com

www.gay.com

An online community for gay individuals.

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association

www.glma.org

The world's largest and oldest association of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health-care professionals.

GLBT National Health Center

1-888-THE-GLNH (national hotline)

1-888-246-PRIDE (national youth talk line)

www.glnh.org

Provides free and confidential telephone and e-mail peer counseling, information, and local resources for GLBT and questioning individuals.

The Gay Men's Health Crisis

www.gmhc.org

GMHC offers an array of programs and services to thousands of men, women, and children every year.

The Network/La Red

1-617-742-4911

www.thenetworklared.org

A group that works to end abuse in lesbian, bisexual women's, and transgender communities.

cancers–female sexual

I Am Not Breast Cancer: Women Talk Openly About Love and Sex, Hair Loss and Weight Gain, Mothers and Daughters, and Being a Woman with Breast Cancer, by Ruth Peltason (New York: William Morrow, 2008).

Entries from eight hundred women around the world offer comfort, strength, and hope.

National Cervical Cancer Coalition

www.nccc-online.org

A coalition battling cervical cancer and HPV-related issues.

National Ovarian Cancer Coalition

www.ovarian.org

A group dedicated to offering education, support, and hope for patients and to raising awareness of ovarian cancer across the country.

Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

1-800-221-2141

www.y-me.org

Support, information, and resources for women battling breast cancer.

cancers–male sexual

Surviving Prostate Cancer: What You Need to Know to Make Informed Decisions, by E. Fuller Torrey (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press Health & Wellness, 2008).
A doctor's account of battling and surviving prostate cancer, complete with personal experience and factual material.

Testicular Cancer Information & Support

www.tc-cancer.com

Education and support for patients with testicular cancer and their families.

eating disorders

National Eating Disorders Association

800.931.2237

www.edap.org

The largest nonprofit organization in the United States working to prevent eating disorders and provide treatment referrals to those suffering from eating disorders and body-image and weight issues.

National Health Information Center

www.health.gov/nhic

NHIC offers a nationwide referral service and produces directories and resource guides.

infertility

National Infertility Network Exchange

www.nine-infertility.org

A national nonprofit organization for persons and couples with impaired fertility, and the professionals that serve them.

National Women's Health Information Center

www.4women.gov

Information and resources on women's health.

massage

The Art of Sensual Massage, by Gordon Inkeles (Bayside, Calif.: Arcata Arts, 2006).
Techniques for spreading pleasure over every inch of your partner's body.

Sexuality.org

www.sexuality.org

Includes a complete online step-by-step guide to erotic massage.

menopause

The North American Menopause Society

www.menopause.org

A group devoted to promoting women's health and quality of life through an understanding of menopause.

The Wisdom of Menopause: Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing During the Change, 2nd edition, by Christiane Northrup (New York: Bantam Books, 2006).

Cofounder of the Women to Women health-care center Christiane Northrup's comprehensive guide to menopausal health and well-being.

relationships

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233

www.ndvh.org

Planned Parenthood Federation of America
(PPFA)

1-800-230-PLAN

www.plannedparenthood.org

A women's health-care provider, educator,
and advocate.

The Relationship Cure, by John Gottman (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2002).

A how- to for learning to communicate in every relationship.

sex therapy

American Association of Sexuality, Educators, Counselors and Therapists

www.aasect.org

Information on finding a local sex therapist.

sexual health

Mayo Clinic

www.mayoclinic.com

A nonprofit medical practice dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of virtually every type of complex illness.

National Women's Health Information Center

www.4women.gov

A government agency with free health information for women.

National Women's Health Resource Center

1-877-986-9472

www.healthywomen.org

A nonprofit independent health information source for women.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

(PPFA)

1-800-230-PLAN

www.plannedparenthood.org

A women's health-care provider, educator, and advocate.

The Sexual Health Network

www.sexualhealth.com

Easy access to information and resources on sexuality for men and women.

Vaginismus Awareness Network

www.vaginismus-awareness-network.org Detailed information for women, including facts and advice and pros and cons of various treatments.

Web MD

www.webmd.com

A source for medical information and resources.

support

If a lack of joy in sex is an occasional, minor issue, there are helpful suggestions throughout the book. If it's a serious issue, you should look further afield.

In our society there are still taboos about doing that; a problem may feel too small, too big, or too embarrassing to seek help in addressing. You should still do so – not just because there are far fewer taboos now but also because there is far more available help. Over the past fifty years, medical and counseling treatments have improved beyond all recognition; by treating a physical condition, resolving a past trauma, increasing knowledge, improving communication, changing inaccurate attitudes, or rebuilding a failing relationship, there is a very good chance of a solution.

Do both partners of a couple have to seek help? Ideally, but not necessarily; if one alone is helped, that may well impact on the other. But it is loving good practice, when it comes to sexual problems just as much as sex itself, to hold a partner's hand. Problem-solve together if you can – whether when reading a self-help book or seeing a counselor.

Here are some general guidelines on finding help; accessibility will vary from country to country and culture to culture.

- **Self-help books** Details of favorites follow; see [resources](#). If you are choosing your own, avoid ones that make extravagant claims, those written by authors with affiliations to commercial enterprises, and those that sound as if they will perform miracles; they won't. A textbook on a sexual problem, or a book written by an academic, may be drier than a popularization but is likely to be more accurate.

- **Organizations** For most problems, there are corresponding national or international organizations; the best offer information, guidelines, a telephone help line, chat rooms for sufferer support, networking opportunities, advisory boards to which you can write and get personalized answers, lists of practitioners, even training courses and conferences.

Almost all reputable ones are now available on the Internet; see [resources](#), for details. For local options, search on the name of the problem plus key words such as “symptoms ... treatments.” The upside of the Web means that this will bring you instant access to all the best sites; the downside is that these may well be intermingled with the worst. To sort the sheep from the goats, remember that those affiliated to charitable rather than product-selling organizations will be more useful, as will websites for national or group schemes rather than individual practitioners.

- **Help lines** Many organizations also run help lines, and additionally there are help lines not affiliated to other organizational services. Both offer anonymous and immediate advice. Good ones will be informed about sexual problems, and happy to give information and offer short-term emotional support. However, don't expect medical

diagnosis, or in-depth or long-term counseling. It will help, before phoning, to make a list of your symptoms or problems and any previous treatment you have had or any action you have taken.

- **Health and medical professions** Seeing your own general practitioner is an essential first step in checking out any sexual problem, not only because the problem itself may be due to a health condition or a side effect of its treatment, but also because more difficulties than before are now helped by medical solutions. If the clinician you consult is hostile or embarrassed, change clinicians; as with all services, shop around.

- **Face-to-face support** If you have ruled out medical issues, or if you suspect that what underpins your problems is a personal hang-up or a relationship difficulty, see a counselor. Ways of tracking such down will vary, but the relevant national organization for each specific problem will often have a list of therapists, as may your general practitioner.

It's best to phone the counselor first to check out basic issues, such as where they live and how much they charge. Then arrange an exploratory visit; once there, ask further questions regarding their experience and their working methods, and assess whether you and they get along. Training and qualifications are important, but have been proved to be less crucial for treatment success than experience and rapport with you, the client.

- **Exercises** Many counselors will ask you not only to discuss problems but also to talk through sexual issues or practice sexual techniques at home. In particular, they may ask you to masturbate alone or together; to practice "sensate focus," a way of relearning how to touch and be touched; to experiment with ways of managing his erection and her orgasm. Neither counselors nor physicians, however, should ever ask you to be sexual with them or in front of them, or to undress without a chaperone present. Practicing techniques is an integral part of much sexual counselling, but you should do this only so far and so fast as you are comfortable.

For all the above, from books to experts, the key is whether you feel at ease with them. If not, however qualified, lauded, or credible your sources of help, look elsewhere.

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