

Ten Things to Do Before Saying “I Do”



Many people spend more time planning for a wedding than they spend planning for a marriage. Before deciding to tie the knot, consider these tips to help create a “happily ever after.”

1. Ask: Am I ready? The happiest relationships are built on a foundation of two happy, healthy people ready to take on the challenges of a new life together. Those ready to be in a long-term relationship have dealt with their own personal challenges and issues and are not looking for someone to make them happy or to “fix” them in some way (or vice versa).

2. Take time. Really getting to know someone requires talking (mutual self-disclosure) + being together (in a variety of situations) + time. Because most people are usually on their best behavior when they first meet, and it takes time for patterns of behavior to emerge, this process can't be

rushed.

3. Be cautious when in long-distance relationships. While online dating is a common way to meet people, steer clear of commitment without spending a lot of time in person in varying situations. It is easier to show only our best selves in long-distance relationships.

4. Play detective. Ask deep and meaningful questions to help you know if you are compatible with the person you are dating. For example, check out these 10 Questions to Ask Before Saying I Do. To ensure you aren't biased about how you view the person you are dating, think about how others might view him or her, or even ask others about their opinions and be willing to listen to what they say about warning signs you may have missed.

5. Start to become part of the family. Much of who people are was learned from growing up in their family, so a lot can be learned about what someone will be like as a partner and parent from observing, asking questions, and spending time with their family. If there are concerns about a partner's family or negative traits that a partner has learned from his or her family, you may want to think twice before getting too serious. While change is possible, it takes time and effort, and it is much easier to change before getting into a serious relationship.

6. Watch for personality compatibility. While most people won't have everything in common with their partner, happy relationships often have many of these important similar traits: emotional temperament, sense of humor, intelligence, energy levels, similar recreation interests, and how affection is expressed.

7. Be aware of each other's values. Some of the biggest arguments in relationships relate to those things valued most because of strong feelings and opinions about

them. Having similarities in how religious/spiritual you are, having common financial views and goals, and having similar ideas about family life are all significant factors in lasting relationship satisfaction.

8. Watch for daily life compatibility. While it may not be romantic, the truth is that most of the time spent in a long-term relationship is in the daily routines of life. Consider such things as: Who will earn and manage the money? How will household responsibilities be divided? How will free time be spent? The answers to these questions can be crucial to a happy relationship.

9. Learn conflict resolution skills. Because everyone is different, conflict is inevitable in even the happiest relationships. When handled positively, overcoming conflict can strengthen relationships. Having a conflict plan in place can be helpful. Begin by setting the ground rules, such as choosing when and where to deal with conflict, remembering to be respectful, and practicing good listening and communication skills.

10. Plan now to keep your relationship strong. As with cars, relationships need regular preventative maintenance to run smoothly. Research suggests that relationship education (such as attending a class or reading a relationship book together) can help relationships stay strong. Consider what you will do as a couple to create a relationship that is "happily ever after."

For class schedules on relationships and further tips and information, visit HealthyRelationshipsUtah.org and Utah Marriage Commission at USU.

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