

QUICK POLL



Does your boyfriend have a secret?

Everyone has secrets. Not my business.

Probably, but he will tell me when he's ready.

No, we share everything with each other

Should you blurt it out on the second date, or keep your lips zipped for months? Our exclusive poll reveals the best time.

By Lisa Cericola

While it's perfectly normal to proclaim your love for your pet cat or NASCAR racing, pairing the L-word with your sweetie's name might not roll off the tongue so easily. And according to a recent poll of 14,000 men and women, we're an extremely cautious lot. It's probably a no-brainer that many people (29 percent) thought a week or two is too soon to profess your feelings. But about as many (26 percent) thought a month or two was jumping the gun, and the majority of people polled (32 percent) think you should keep your lips zipped for a whopping six whole months. Interestingly (and a bit sadly, if you ask us), 13 percent admit they never say "I love you" at all!

Why are people so careful when it comes to admitting their affections? Largely due to a growing awareness that this phrase means different things to different people—and a fear that the admission may be misinterpreted. "These three little words are loaded with implications and expectations, but not always the same ones for each individual," says April Masini, a relationship expert and author of *Think & Date Like A Man*. "One person may say 'I love you' purely to communicate how much they enjoy being with you, others say it as a way to indicate they'd like to make their relationship exclusive." Combine that with past rejection and the

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Browse singles in your area.

I am a

seeking

between

and
Located in (city/zip)

.....
**Work up to the
L-word with
phrases like "You
mean so much to
me."**
.....

fear of being vulnerable, and it's understandable why most people choose to play it cool.

But waiting for the other person to make the first move isn't always a smart idea either. "Healthy relationships aren't played out like poker games, waiting for the other person to show their hand," Masini points out. If you're feeling shy, Masini suggests taking baby steps to vocalize your feelings, using phrases like "You mean so much to me" or "You're really special," until you're

comfortable working up to the three little words that carry so much weight. That way, you can gauge whether your partner is receptive and feels completely ready when (and if!) it's time to really share how you feel.

Lisa Cericola is a New York City-based writer who's written for First For Women, Southern Living, and other publications.

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