



First-date body language—decoded  
By Margot Carmichael Lester



First dates: There you are, hanging out with someone you hardly know, trying to figure out if you like her and if she likes you. But you're no behavioral psychologist, so aside from her getting up and walking away, how are you supposed to gauge how things are going? We asked four dating and body-language experts to clue you in to those key first-date signals that reveal what she's really thinking.

#### The eyes have it

"If she makes full eye contact with you when you're talking, and doesn't turn her eyes away from yours before you're done speaking, she's enjoying the time you're spending together," says dating expert April Masini, author of the e-book *50 First Dates*. But if her eyes flit away or scan the room, she's just not that into you. And if she's looking at her watch or glancing towards a clock, not at all a good sign: She's probably wishing she were elsewhere.

#### The lean-in

How she sits in her seat across the dinner table from you will tell you a good deal about how interested she is. Sure, some people are naturally most comfortable leaning back in their chair, but honestly, when it comes to a dating situation, you want to see her leaning forward. That means she wants to get closer, to move towards your zone.

If, however, she leans back or folds her arms over her chest, that's not a great sign. She's not relaxing in that position: Her body's saying 'do not touch' even if her voice isn't. But just because you're getting these signs, don't assume the date is dead in the water. It's possible to turn the situation around—with a combination of body language and spoken language: "Engage her in conversation about subjects that she finds interesting," notes Rachel Greene Baldino, MSW, LCSW, author of *The New Age Guide To Loving Simply: Eliminating Drama from Your Intimate Relationships*. "As she talks, do not interrupt. Be sure that you are sending only the most positive non-verbal messages. Lean forward in your chair, smile or laugh when appropriate, and make a lot of eye contact."

#### The hand-touch

Often, a pat of her hand against yours, perhaps while making a point when chatting, can signal that she's relaxed and interested. But, in some cases, you may just be out with someone who's very tactile, cautions Masini. "If she's the kind of person who's normally touchy-feely and she puts her hand on yours while she's talking, you may think she's hot for you, when really, she does this to everyone." So before you jump to conclusions about this kind of contact, it's better to err on the side of caution and see how she interacts with others. This is a good path to take, you may find, because when it comes to mixed signals, explains Mike Domitrz, author of *May I Kiss You?*, touching is often the culprit.

What's the best thing to do if you are in a mixed-signals situation? You can look for more body language clues that indicate interest—or make a bolder move and ask her how she feels. "Are you having a good time?" or "Are you having fun?" work well. You'll be able to tell if she's saying yes just to be polite—thanks, once again, to body language. For instance, she'll avoid eye contact or fidget while answering. And while it's never fun to see negative signals, at least if you can read the body-language code, you won't waste your time pursuing someone who's not interested. You can move on and pursue someone who is.