

## Marriage Rules for the Digital Age

By [Francesca Di Meglio](#)

Today's marriages face an unprecedented [challenge](#)<sup>1</sup>. Never before has there been so much technology, which despite providing some benefits, threatens personal interaction and relationships. On the one hand, couples are able to communicate more often throughout the day and even when they are away. While hubby is at the supermarket, you can reach him to remind him to pick up the milk, writes April Masini, the relationship expert at [AskApril.com](#)<sup>2</sup>, in an e-mail. And while you are in California on business, you can even see each other through video chats. At the same time, however, you can get lost in your text messages, communicate with others, and be in the same room with your spouse without even noticing because of the technological distractions all around you. Since your marriage is the most precious relationship you have, you need to protect it. So, here are Masini's marriage rules for the digital age:

### 1. No cell phones at dinner.

When you and your spouse are lucky enough to [dine together](#)<sup>3</sup> (which should happen as often as possible if not every night), then you should give each other your undivided attention. This means that you should shut off all your devices or remove them from your presence. "Cell phones may seem to be part of a dinner time place setting, along with the salad fork and butter knife, but it's a good idea to take the cell phone off the table and turn it off while you're eating together," writes Masini. Sit and talk to each other - face to face. Share the particulars of your day, some hopes for the future (even if it's just the weekend), and interact directly with one another.

### 2. Have an electronics-free bedroom.

Ok, this is a tough one. Keeping all electronics out of [the bedroom](#)<sup>4</sup> might seem impossible, especially if you like to watch TV before falling asleep. Maybe you can allow the TV and nothing else. Or you can bring in an iPad for movie viewing. But you should do your best to put a limit on the technology entering your bedroom and keep everything off when you're trying to get intimate. You should be able to have sex the old-fashioned way without the use of electronics. Actually touching each other is a great experience and one not to be missed if you know what I mean.

### 3. Beware the messages you send.

You never leave a paper trail nowadays. Most people don't know what paper is. But you do leave a digital trail. Even if you delete [messages](#)<sup>5</sup> or think that your cell phone or e-mailbox is super private, it's not, reminds Masini. She hears from people, who tracked their mate's messages, and didn't like what they saw. "You may be faithful to your spouse, but that photo you send your ex, that's slightly flirty (or very flirty) will set off fireworks if and when it's seen by someone you didn't intend," adds Masini. "Think before you send." If it's something you would not want your spouse to see, then don't send it.

### 4. Make time for physical contact.

Some couples create a false sense of closeness because of technology. They think that they are in love or intimate because they message and video chat all the time. But they rarely, if ever, see each other in person. Granted, most married couples have spent some time face to face. But even those in long-distance marriages tend to have unique challenges when they finally get together in person. "When they do meet up in person, they realize all the 'holes' in the relationship that weren't clear because technology doesn't convey everything when it comes to human dynamics," writes Masini. "A message via prose or text is not fueled by non-verbal cues which can be instrumental in conveying feelings." Touching is magical, so get up, close, and personal as soon as you can.

### 5. Be mindful of Internet porn.

The Internet has made porn super accessible to people. And you don't have to even be embarrassed because you can check out the naked ladies from the comfort of your living room. But wives tend to take it personally when they discover their husband watching porn. Masini warns that lots of men look at porn and it's no big deal. They are visual creatures seeking stimulation and nothing more. The problems arise if they are [addicted to porn](#)<sup>6</sup> (their viewing gets in the way of their real life and relationships) or if they are soliciting real women with whom they have inappropriate relationships. That's another story and one that you must address.

### 6. Unplug once per week.

If you can, shut off all technology for an entire day and just be with each other. If once a week is too often, then consider once a month or some other schedule that works for you. It will be a challenge at first, but the rewards will make it worth it. Just think about the conversation and all that kissing without a beep or a ring.

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