

# how compat

Stop in the name of love . . . and take our his 'n' hers quiz, designed to help you and your hono



by **Dina Roth Port**

Do you and your other half mesh like milk and cookies or co-exist like oil and water? Answer these questions, then let your guy have a go at them (no peeking!) to discover whether you're on the same wavelength—and to find out how to take your relationship to a whole new level.

**1** For Valentine's Day, your ideal evening would be:

- a. Dinner at a swanky restaurant.
- b. Cooking together, then watching a movie in bed.
- c. Taking in a jazz concert.
- d. Box seats for the big game.

**2** Which sport is most like your relationship?

- a. Basketball—a thrill a minute.
- b. Karate—we're at each other's throats.
- c. Golf—it just putters along.
- d. Doubles tennis—we count on being in each other's court.

**3** "Men and women can't be friends because the sex part always gets in the way."

—Harry Burns, *When Harry Met Sally*. True or false?

- a. True
- b. False

**4** Is cash the key to happiness?

- a. As Sophie Tucker once said, "I have been poor and I have been rich. Rich is better."
- b. Money can't buy me love.
- c. I'd be happy whether I was scraping by or rolling in dough.
- d. Money is the root of all evil.

**5** Whom do you find most attractive?

- a. Catherine Zeta-Jones—curvy in all the right places.
- b. Calista Flockhart—supersleek is sexy.
- c. Madonna—buff is beautiful.
- d. Queen Latifah—more to love.

**6** As for decorating, you two:

- a. Argue about everything from furniture to ceiling fans.
- b. Are synchronized shoppers.
- c. Believe it's the woman's job—a guy's flair ends at frat rooms.
- d. Hire a decorator.

**7** You won \$10,000 in the lottery. You'll . . .

- a. Donate the moola to charity.
- b. Go on a spree with stops at Tiffany & Co. and Circuit City.
- c. Sock it away for a rainy day.
- d. Take your family on a cruise.

**8** What's the best way to resolve a fight?

- a. Stew separately, then let it blow over.
- b. Cool down for an hour or so, then discuss things rationally.
- c. Hash it out until it's resolved—even if you're up until dawn.
- d. Launch right into make-up sex and forget about it.

**9** A happy home is:

- a. Always open to friends, family and the occasional lost soul.
- b. Private—what happens behind closed doors stays there.

# ble are you?

your trouble spots, ID your assets and just possibly fall for each other all over again.

- c. The kind of place where you can put your feet up on the coffee table, drink out of the milk carton and have sex on the kitchen floor.
- d. As calm as a deserted beach.

**10** Your friend asks you to come to her couples' costume party dressed as the duo you relate to most. You show up as:

- a. Romeo and Juliet
- b. Sonny and Cher
- c. Hugh Hefner and his Playmate du jour
- d. Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head

**11** When you're in the car together, usually:

- a. One of you tries to savor the silence; the other yaps away.
- b. You're bickering—one of you tends to be a backseat driver.
- c. You're chatting all the way—it's the time to reconnect.
- d. You're lost—a certain someone refuses to ask for directions.

**12** Your 3-year-old just kicked another kid on the playground. The best way to discipline him?

- a. Give him a spanking.
- b. Issue a five-minute time-out.
- c. Encourage him to explain why he felt like kicking.
- d. Revoke playground privileges for the week.

**13** While running errands, you bump into an old flame who

suggests having lunch. You:

- a. Decline; the past has passed.
- b. Suggest a great little sushi place without a second thought.
- c. Accept, then invite your other half—they'd get along great.
- d. Ask for a rain check. You'd never go without your partner's consent.

**14** What's an area the two of you need to work on?

- a. Sex—you spend more QT with Ben & Jerry's Karamel Sutra than the *Kama Sutra*.
- b. Conflict resolution—your fights go in more circles than a merry-go-round.
- c. Time management—what you wouldn't give for a 25th hour.
- d. Communication—one of you might as well speak Swahili.

**15** Which song title best describes your sex life?

- a. "I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"
- b. "Love Me Tender"
- c. "Sex Machine"
- d. "Into the Groove"

**16** A woman's place is in the home. True or false?

- a. True: If she has kids.
- b. True: It's written in her DNA.
- c. False: You'd have to be crazy to give up a paycheck.
- d. False: It's wherever she damn well wants it to be.

**17** Your waitress not only gets your order wrong but takes an eternity to serve it. You:

- a. Endure.
- b. Politely explain the problem and ask her to hustle.
- c. Angrily send back your meal and downsize your tip.
- d. Tell the manager that the service is unacceptable.

**18** Which sentence will most likely trigger an argument?

- a. "But my fantasy football league meets on Friday. . . ."
- b. "What's this Visa charge?"
- c. "I thought we'd spend Thanksgiving with my family this year."
- d. "Not tonight, honey. I've got a headache."

**19** One night you're pulled three ways. What takes priority?

- a. Staying home with your spouse—he's had a rotten day.
- b. Drinks with your old college roommate—it's been ages!
- c. Working late to wrap up a project—your boss needs you.
- d. Whatever your little heart desires—you owe it to yourself.

**20** The definition of romance?

- a. A see-through thong, massage oil and a bottle of merlot.
- b. Being there for each other—even when you're up at 4 A.M. with the stomach flu.
- c. A dozen roses and old-fashioned chivalry.
- d. E-mails during the day just to say "I love you." ➤

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# answer key

Give yourself one point for every question for which you and your partner chose the same response.

IF YOU SCORED

## 0-6

**YOU'RE PERFECT STRANGERS**



Sharon and Ozzy

If opposites attract, you two must be stuck like superglue. Maybe you thrive on your marked differences, and even find them exciting, because you believe your partner tempers your actions and shows you an alternate view of the world. Or you may think it's comfortable and familiar to disagree all the time—possibly because one or both of you are subconsciously copying your parents' own contentious communicating style, says Susan Heitler, Ph.D., a psychologist in Denver and author of *The Power of Two*.

It's not vital to always see eye-to-eye, says Heitler. After all, there are plenty of lasting partnerships like yours—Ozzy and Sharon, Arnold and Maria, Beauty and the Beast. What's crucial, of course, is flexibility. "Give up that 'my way or the highway' mentality and learn win-win decision-making skills," says Heitler.

Often, it's the subtleties of your exchanges that build a bridge or put up a wall. Have you gotten so used to being contrary that it's become the norm? Do you reflexively dismiss your partner's opinions? Talk over each other? If so, you may wind up with a minefield of taboo topics—and a growing gap—between you.

"First, try to understand your partner's viewpoint," says Kate Wachs, Ph.D., a psychologist in Chicago. Acknowledge his or her perspective before jumping in with your own and you're more likely to have a constructive conversation, says Wachs. If he or she is the dogmatic one, flip-flop your MO—ask your partner to validate your viewpoint before voicing his or her own. And if you always have your back up, chances are you're like that with everyone—your mom, friends—so practice bending a little. Being opposites can be detrimental if, for example, one person is submissive and the other is controlling. If this scenario sounds familiar, you may be feeding off—and encouraging—each other's weaknesses and could benefit from speaking to a couple's therapist. Otherwise, *viva la différence!*

IF YOU SCORED

## 7-13

**YOU'RE QUITE TIGHT**

Your relationship is as balanced as an acrobat tiptoeing on a tightrope. You and your mate understand that common principles are what make your pairing compatible—but considerable differences keep it exciting. To make the most of this quiz, take a closer look at your responses. When it comes to questions for which you had the same answers, remember that actions speak louder than words, says Wachs. What does it matter that you both consider a surprise bouquet to be ultra-romantic if neither of you ever dial FTD? And if you agree that you need to spice up your sex life, it's what you do with that insight—renting a steamy flick or at least scooting your bearded collie out of the

Michael and Catherine



bed—that's more important than simply acknowledging the problem.

As for the questions you answered differently, disparity on hot-button issues such as sex, money and family are a lot more combustible than, say, if one of you loves Mozart and the other likes Moby. "If you're at odds on one of the biggies, you'll have a steeper slope at overcoming them," says Heitler. "But if you're invested in finding solutions that work for both of you, it's possible."

Try breaking down a major issue—such as money—into manageable topics rather than viewing it as one enormous catastrophe. If a fight ensues over how much to spend remodeling the kitchen, for instance, it can help if you both write a punch list of your needs (cabinets to countertops) and concerns. Together, you can address every point and map a plan of action that makes you both happy.

Finally, try to put your partner's quirks in perspective.

"It's not the end of the world if he or she leaves dirty towels on the floor," says Wachs. "You can't fight every battle." Save the impassioned pleas for the huge stuff (they'll have more impact that way), and spend most of your energy enjoying your similarities *and* idiosyncrasies. It's one of the secrets to a snug, stable, yet continually surprising union. Looks like you're already well on your way.



Jennifer and Brad

#### IF YOU SCORED

## 14-20

### YOU'RE SEPARATED AT BIRTH

Move over, Justin Timberlake—you and your honey are more "in sync" than that boy band will ever be. And that's great news! "Couples who have similar views, desires and values will probably have fewer bumps along the road than those who don't because they agree on the issues they consider important," says Stephen Emlen, Ph.D., a professor of behavioral ecology and co-author of a recent Cornell University study that supports the "likes-attract" theory.

We'd wager that you've probably mastered the art of listening. You take each other's perspectives into account and have developed shared opinions on almost everything. Just make sure that your perpetual united front isn't

a sign that you don't allow each other to be different.

"When people agree too much, it can be an indication that someone is holding back," explains Wachs. Whether discussing the merits of the latest Quentin Tarantino film or where to spend your next vacation, ask yourselves if both points of view are being equally represented, or if one is simply becoming an offshoot of the other. If you notice your mate's keeping mum, encourage his or her opinion and give positive reinforcement—a simple thank you will do—when he or she does pipe up.

Experts agree that happiness doesn't hinge on being perpetually on the same page. When partners feel they should be clones instead of individuals who share a life, the relationship can become stale, says Heitler. Shake things up by pursuing separate hobbies and scheduling enough time apart with friends and family so you're exposed to new ideas. Remember: Sometimes there's nothing more invigorating—or sexier—than a gulp of fresh air. **L**