

Marriage Exercises from John Gottman

Play this game together in the spirit of laughter and gentle fun. The more you play, the more you'll learn about the love maps concept and how to apply it to your relationship.

STEP 1. Each of you should take a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Together, randomly decide on twenty numbers between 1 and 60.

STEP 2. Below is a list of numbered questions. Beginning with the top of your column, match the numbers you chose with the corresponding question. Each of you should ask your partner this question. If your spouse answers correctly (you be the judge), he or she receives the number of points indicated for that question, and you receive one point. If your spouse answers incorrectly, neither of you receives any points. The same rules apply when you answer. The winner is the person with the higher score after you've both answered all twenty questions.

1. Name my two closest friends. (2)
2. What is my favorite musical group, composer, or instrument? (2)
3. What was I wearing when we first met? (2)
4. Name one of my hobbies. (3)
5. Where was I born? (1)
6. What stresses am I facing right now? (4)
7. Describe in detail what I did today, or yesterday. (4)
8. When is my birthday? (1)
9. What is the date of our anniversary? (1)
10. Who is my favorite relative? (2)
11. What is my fondest unrealized dream? (5)
12. What is my favorite website? (2)
13. What is one of my greatest fears or disaster scenarios?
14. What makes me feel most competent? (4)
15. What is my favorite meal? (2)
16. What is my favorite way to spend an evening? (2)
17. What is my favorite color? (1)
18. What personal improvements do I want to make in my life? (4)
19. What kind of present would I like best? (2)
20. What was one of my best childhood experiences? (2)
21. What was my favorite vacation? (2)
22. What is one of my favorite ways to relax? (4)
23. Who is my greatest source of support (other than you)? (3)
24. What is my favorite sport? (2)
25. What do I most like to do with time off? (2)
26. What is one of my favorite weekend activities? (2)
27. What is my dream getaway place? (3)

28. What is my favorite movie? (2)
29. What are some of the important events coming up in my life? How do I feel about them? (4)
30. What are some of my favorite ways to work out? (2)
31. Who was my best friend in childhood? (3)
32. What is one of my favorite magazines? (2)
33. Name one of my major rivals or "enemies"? (3)
34. What would I consider my ideal job? (4)
35. What do I fear the most? (4)
36. Who is my least favorite relative? (3)
37. What is my favorite holiday? (2)
38. What kinds of books do I most like to read? (3)
39. What is my favorite TV show? (2)
40. Which side of the bed do I prefer? (2)
41. What am I most sad about? (4)
42. Name one of my concerns or worries. (4)
43. What medical problems do I worry about? (2)
44. What was my most embarrassing moment? (3)
45. What was my worst childhood experience? (3)
46. Name two of the people I most admire. (4)
47. What is one of my favorite desserts? (2)
48. What is my social security number? (2)
49. Name one of my favorite novels. (2)
50. What is my favorite restaurant? (2)
51. What are two of my aspirations, hopes, wishes? (4)
52. Do I have a secret ambition? What is it? (4)
53. What foods do I hate? (2)
54. What is my favorite animal? (2)
55. What is my favorite song? (2)
56. Which sports team is my favorite? (2)

Play this game as frequently as you'd like. The more you play, the more you'll come to understand the concept of a love map and the kind of information yours should include about your spouse.

Expressing Appreciation

From the list below, select five appreciations you would like to express toward your partner in your own words, adding an example of when your partner demonstrated each action or

displayed the positive qualities you are appreciating. In my workshops, I can see the benefit of this exercise immediately.

Thanks for making dinner. It was delicious.
Thanks for taking care of the kids.
Thanks for being such a great dad.
Thanks for cleaning up the kitchen.
Thanks for doing the laundry.
Thanks for supporting me when I talked about my stress.
Thanks for doing the dishes.
Thanks for listening to how my day went.
Thanks for being understanding when I talked about that rude person I met.
I really appreciated you being so affectionate lately.
I really enjoyed the conversation at dinner.
Thanks for being such a great mom.
Taking a walk together was really nice.
I really appreciated your giving me a hug.
That is a fantastic color on you.
Thanks for spending time with me.
Thank you for caring about what I need.
Thanks for bringing me flowers.
It matters to me a lot when you are so great with the kids.
The way you treat my family means a lot to me.
Thanks for making me feel like I am important to you.
Thanks for putting on music that I love.
Thanks for all the driving you are doing.
Thanks for working so hard for our family.
Thank you for taking me out to dinner. That was great.
Thank you for listening to me.
Thanks for calling the plumber (electrician, handyman, carpenter, gardener, etc.).
Thank you for just being there when I felt sad.
Thank you for being empathetic with me.
Thank you for being on my side.
Thank you for comforting me.
Thank you for being gentle with me. I had fun at the party.
Thank you for being with me.
Thanks for saving money for us.
Thank you for laughing.
Thank you for telling me what you need.
Thanks for giving me some time to myself.
Thank you for greeting me so warmly when I come home.
I really appreciate that drive we took.
Thanks for taking over the chores.
I loved the picnic we had.

You look great tonight.
Thanks for taking care of me when I was sick.
Thank you for telling me how you feel.
I appreciate what a loyal partner you are.
You smell so good.
Thank you for loving me.
Thanks for making our home so beautiful.
Thanks for spending time with my family.
Thanks for making coffee for me.
Those pastries were delicious. Thanks for getting them.
Thanks for calling the doctor when I needed an appointment.
Thanks for the way you are paying the bills.
Thanks for sticking up for me when I got criticized.

Accepting Each Other's Influence

Imagine that your cruise ship just sank in the Caribbean, and you awaken to find yourselves on a deserted island. The cast members of *Lost* are nowhere in sight—the two of you are the only survivors. One of you is injured. You have no idea where you are. You think there's some chance that people know of the ship's distress, but you're not sure. A storm appears to be on the way. You decide that you need to prepare to survive on this island for some time and also to make sure you'll be spotted by a rescue party. There is a bunch of stuff from the ship on the beach that could help you, but you can only carry ten items.

STEP 1: Each of you writes down on a separate piece of paper what you consider the ten most important items to keep from the inventory list below, based on your survival plan. Then rank-order these items based on their importance to you. Give the most crucial item a 1, the next most crucial a 2, and so on. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. Two changes of clothing
2. AM/FM and shortwave radio receiver
3. Ten gallons of water
4. Pots and pans
5. Matches
6. Shovel
7. Backpack
8. Toilet paper
9. Two tents
10. Two sleeping bags
11. Knife
12. Small life raft, with sail
13. Sunblock lotion
14. Cookstove and lantern
15. Long rope
16. Two walkie-talkie sender/receiver units
17. Freeze-dried food for seven days
18. One change of clothing
19. 19. One fifth of whiskey
20. Flares
21. Compass
22. Regional aerial maps
23. Gun with six bullets
24. First-aid kit with penicillin
25. Oxygen tanks

STEP 2: Share your list with your partner. Together come up with a consensus list of ten items. That means talking it over and working as a team to solve the problem. Both of you need to be influential in discussing the problem and in making the final decisions.

When you've finished, it's time to evaluate how the game went. You should both answer the questions below.

1. How effective do you think you were at influencing your spouse?
2. How effective was your spouse at influencing you?
3. Did either of you try to dominate the other, or were you competitive with each other?
4. 4. Did you sulk or withdraw?
5. Did your partner sulk or withdraw?
6. Did you have fun?
7. Did you work well as a team?
8. How much irritability or anger did you feel?
9. How much irritability or anger did your partner feel?

10. Did you both feel included?