

HOW TO BE A GOOD WIFE

Being a good wife is not easy, even if you have a near-perfect husband. To be a good wife, you have to be able to communicate effectively, to keep your romance alive, and to be your husband's best friend while maintaining your own identity. If you want to know how to do it, just follow these steps.

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

1. EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS AND NEEDS EFFECTIVELY.

Your husband doesn't have clairvoyant powers. If you want something, ask. If something is wrong, say so. Don't drop hints or figure he'll "come around" or you'll never get anything done. If you want to be able to express how you feel, you should be able to speak with a positive tone and to listen to what your husband says instead of being accusatory. Here are some ways to do it:

- A. Send "I messages." Instead of accusing him of not meeting your needs, focus the conversation on yourself. For instance, tell him, "I feel ignored when I don't see you until 6:30 every night."
- B. Listen to what he says. When he tells you something, repeat what he said back to him so that he knows you understand. For example, "I hear you saying that you're worried about finances, and that's why you've been working late."
- C. Avoid passing judgment. Let him finish what he's saying before you respond. After he's done talking, offer a solution. For instance, say, "I'm willing to live on a tighter budget if that means that I get to see you more often."

2. PICK YOUR BATTLES.

Some issues are worth fighting about, and some aren't. If you spend all of your time nitpicking your husband about minor problems that don't really matter, then he's not going to listen to you when major issues come up.

- A. Criticism can destroy a relationship. As long as the dishes are clean and unbroken, for instance, don't nag your husband about how to load the dishwasher "the right way." Let him do things his own way. Don't sweat the small stuff.
- B. Avoid criticizing your husband without doing it constructively. Remember to try to be calm and rational, as strong emotions can easily

turn a discussion into an argument. If you criticize every little thing he does, then he will quickly tune you out.

- C. You should praise your husband for the things he does right much more than you argue with him about things that he does wrong. This will make him much more likely to listen to you, and much happier to be around you.

3. BE UNDERSTANDING WHEN YOU DISCUSS AN ISSUE WITH YOUR HUSBAND.

Fight right. Don't let anger take over because it may cause you to say things that you will regret later. Even when you don't agree with your husband, you need to respect his opinion and his viewpoint. To be a good wife, you need to understand that you may never agree on certain issues. No couple has an identical set of morals and beliefs, which means that both of you will need to learn to cope with occasions where you just can't resolve your opinions.

- A. Talk to him at the right time. Don't just spring your problems on him whenever. Avoid bringing up problems before dinner, while he's paying bills or when he's immersed in a stressful situation, like fixing a problem with your car. And never, ever start an argument in front of your children.^[1]
- B. When you're wrong, admit it. You need to learn to respond to arguments and remain rational so you can recognize and apologize when you've made a misstep.

4. TALK TO YOUR HUSBAND, NOT ABOUT HIM.

Never talk to your friends or your family and say negative things about your husband if you're not communicating with him first. Talking about your husband behind his back is disloyal. When you get married, your first loyalty is to your partner, not to your birth family or your social group.

- A. Complaining about your husband to your friends and family will not only not solve any of your problems, but it will also make them view your relationship in a more negative light.
- B. Your friends and family may think they know what's best for you, but they don't know your relationship as well as you do and may unintentionally give you bad advice.

5. HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.

Neither of you are perfect. Unmet expectations tend to frustrate everyone. If your expectations are truly too high or unrealistic, then you need to set standards that are obtainable. For example, it is unfair to expect lavish possessions and have the love of your life home for every meal. If you want more together time, then be prepared to have that desire fulfilled at some expense.

- A. Remember that no relationship is perfect. If you expect to get along with your husband and be happy 100% of the time, it won't work out for you.
- B. Have realistic financial expectations, too. Maybe you and your husband aren't as far along financially as you hoped you'd be five or ten years down the line -- that's perfectly normal. Work on appreciating what you do have instead of expecting more.

6. DON'T TRY TO CHANGE YOUR HUSBAND.

Accept him as he is and let him know that you would never want him to change in any way for you. He has so much to offer you if only you give him the space to be himself. He is a growing individual, just like you are. Love him for who he is, and he'll love you unconditionally in return.

- A. Accept that you and your husband are not the same person. He won't always see the world the same way that you do, and that's a good thing. Being with someone who isn't exactly like you will make your relationship richer.
- B. There's a difference between asking your husband to clean up more around the house and making him become a hiking fanatic when he hates the outdoors. You can ask him to improve in different areas, but you can't force him to like all of the same things you do.

7. ROLL WITH THE CHANGES.

You will experience crises together, from the loss of a job to the death of a parent. You may suffer financial hardship, or you may find yourselves unexpectedly wealthy and unsure of what to do. Your marriage can survive the changes if you're willing to keep communicating and being flexible. Here are some things to keep in mind as you learn to accept change:

- A. Remember that whatever changes happen, you and your husband are dealing with them as a team, not as people on the opposite side of a battle. Dealing with the changes together makes them much more manageable.

- B. Roll with the changes in your love life. Though you and your husband may still be passionately in love, don't get disappointed if he doesn't want to make love every night or to kiss you twenty times a day like he did when you were newlyweds. You can still keep your love strong without wanting it to be exactly the same as it was when you first got married.
 - C. Roll with the changes with your bodies. Though you may work hard to stay fit and eat healthy, you have to accept that your 50-year-old selves probably aren't as svelte as your 25-year-old selves, and that's okay.
8. ACCEPT THAT HAVING CHILDREN CHANGES A RELATIONSHIP.
- You and your husband's relationship will undoubtedly change and evolve once you bring kids into the equation. This doesn't mean it'll change for the worse, but it will mean that you will be spending a lot of your free time focusing on your kids instead of each other. Accept that this will change your relationship and work to make it thrive in new ways.
- A. To help this transition, work together to spend time with the kids, when you can, instead of isolating yourselves by taking turns.
 - B. Find new fun activities that the whole family can do together to help you and your husband stay strong as you raise your kids.
 - C. Strengthen your relationship by acting as a united front with your husband. You should agree on how to raise and discipline your kids so that you don't get into "good cop" and "bad cop" mode and position yourselves against each other when it's time to control your children.
9. ACCEPT YOUR MUTUAL MISTAKES.
- If you want to be accepting as a wife, then you have to be able to accept your husband's mistakes and to sincerely respect his apologies for doing something wrong (as long as it doesn't compromise you in a big way). If you hold a grudge too long, you won't be able to appreciate the good things about your husband, so it's best to accept his apologies, talk about how he won't upset you again in this way, and move forward instead of harboring resentment about the past.
- A. Accept your own mistakes, too. Don't be so focused on being the perfect wife that you can't admit when you're wrong.
 - B. Admitting when you're wrong will help both of you grow as a couple.
10. MEET YOUR HUSBAND'S NEEDS WITHOUT COMPROMISING YOUR OWN.
- If he needs more sex, then open your mind to the possibilities. If he needs time with friends or time to pursue a hobby, then don't be

possessive. He'll be happier, and he'll be grateful to you for your respect. You should meet his needs, or at least some of them, without doing anything that feels uncomfortable to you.

- A. If he wants more sex, then consider having more sex with him, or think about why it doesn't appeal to you.
- B. If he's missing his time out with the boys, let him have a boy's night and have a girl's night of your own.
- C. If he wants time to pursue his hobbies, let him take the time. He'll grow as a person from doing his own thing, and this will benefit your relationship.

11. BE YOUR HUSBAND'S BEST FRIEND.

Develop true intimacy and unconditional acceptance. Demonstrate a willingness to be vulnerable, and be confident that your relationship can withstand conflict. Enjoy your shared history and your inside jokes. Forward him articles you know that he'll find interesting or just sit with him in companionable silence. Even your silence will say volumes when your marriage is strengthened by true friendship.

- A. Though you should maintain other meaningful friendships so your life is full of love and laughter, at the end of the day, your husband should be the person that you turn to.
- B. Aim to be the person that your husband has the most fun with instead of his best friend or his favorite uncle. You should be his #1 go-to person, whether he needs a good laugh or a good cry.

12. Create shared dreams.

Never lose sight of the dreams that you share. Whether your dreams include retiring to a warm climate or taking a trip abroad for your twentieth anniversary, embrace your dreams, talk about them and take steps to make them happen. If you and your husband's dreams don't intersect, then you'll be creating a rift as you both move further towards your goals, or if one of you doesn't get what he or she wants. ^[2]

- A. It's healthy to have your own dreams along with your husband's, but you should make sure that none of your dreams are completely in conflict.
- B. Even if your shared dreams are lofty, you still need to talk about them to keep your passion alive.

13. MAINTAIN YOUR OWN IDENTITY.

Make sure you still have a fun and interesting life. If your husband left tomorrow, would you still have your own friends that you see at least once a month, hobby clubs you go to or sports that you play? If not, your husband will always be working to fill a void he cannot fill, and will feel inadequate. When you're fulfilled as an individual, then you have a lot more to bring to the relationship. You will be a much better companion if you can draw from your own interests, experiences, and insights.^[3]

- A. If your husband thinks that he's the only good thing happening in your life, then he's bound to feel trapped.
- B. Continue to pursue the hobbies or interests that were meaningful to you before the relationship. Though you may not be able to keep up with all or most of them, you should make time for the ones that were really meaningful to you.

14. WORK TOGETHER TO MANAGE STRESS.

Men and women deal with stress all day and every day. Do what you can to help each other deal with the stress of every day life. Making sure that you are able to cope with your own stresses will take pressure off of your marriage. If one of you is chronically stressed out while the other doesn't understand why, then you'll have a problem.

- A. Help your husband manage his stress by talking about it and treating him with extra care when he's had a rough day instead of making him feel worse by being angry that he's tired or withdrawn.
- B. When you're stressed, let your husband know how you're feeling so he can pick up the slack around the house and help you out.

15. MAKE TIME FOR ROMANCE

Make time for "date night." No matter how busy you are, how stressful your job is, or how many kids you have, you need to make time to spend a romantic evening with your husband. If you don't have kids, aim for once a week, and if you do, try to squeeze in a date once every two weeks or as often as you can. Though it may sound corny, dressing up and going somewhere nice and special can renew your romantic connection and give you a breath of fresh air away from your home.

- A. Your "date night" doesn't *have* to be romantically-themed. You can go bowling, play mini-golf, or even go for a night run together. Just do whatever you can to connect and spend some time together.

16. SCHEDULE SEX INTO YOUR LIFE.

You may feel that sex has to be spontaneous, but if you don't add it to your schedule, you may start to neglect it. Without the frequent intimate acceptance and love that comes from your lovemaking, a person can become dissatisfied, grumpy, and ultimately suffer from feelings of rejection and even anger. Remember lovemaking gives an intimacy and physical release that is vital for both of you.

- A. In most relationships, each partner has different needs and expectations regarding the frequency of physical intimacy. Find a happy medium with your husband. Couples who feel responsible for meeting the needs of their lover tend to be happier in their relationship.