



# Are You a Lousy Kisser?

For women, kissing is the gateway to sex. Seal the deal every time

BY LAURA ROBERSON

**I'VE KISSED A LOT OF MEN** in my life. But there's one man I'll remember forever, and not because he had lips like Ryan Phillippe's. Our kiss happened on a balmy summer night as we lay curled on the grass beneath a tree. It was the perfect setup for a hot smooch—the kind that makes a girl want to sling a man against a wall (or tree) and have her way with him.

At least that's the kind of kiss I was hoping for. Instead, the guy went after my face like a Hoover WindTunnel. With a rush of saliva and forced passion, his lips overtook my mouth, my chin, and at some points, my nose. I couldn't breathe, and he mistook my gasps for moans of pleasure. Needless to say, he never got near my lips—or any other part of my body—again.

I'm hardly the Simon Cowell of kissing; I'm just a woman. And women use kissing as a way to assess a potential partner—to decide whether sex is in the cards. Kissing can be one of the hottest forms of foreplay, a way I explore and appreciate my partner's lips and tongue and the feel of his body... if he does it correctly. But don't just take my word for it. We asked 7,274 women to rank the kisses that make their lips curl and consulted top sex experts on how you can do better.

## Your technique is fine, but your breath could clear a room

Onion breath says more than just "Philly cheesesteak." "It suggests you're sloppy and not good with hygiene," says William Cane, author of *The Art of Kissing*. But there's also an evolutionary factor at play: Kissing is one way of assessing your health, and her primal brain may interpret a less-than-pleasant scent as a sign of your inability to fight off germs, according to a 2010 University at Albany study review. "Women have a much stronger olfactory sense than men have," says sex therapist Victoria Zdrok Wilson, Ph.D., author of *The 30-Day Sex Solution*.

Illustration by SEAN NOYCE

And unlike other sensory input, scent is processed almost immediately—the olfactory bulb is directly connected to the brain. So bad breath produces a more visceral (and disgusted) reaction.

**SMOOCH SAVER** Koalas may be onto something. Chewing eucalyptus-extract gum does more than just mask foul-smelling volatile sulfur compounds on your tongue—it can actually wipe them out, a 2010 Japanese study found. Try Wrigley's Airwaves Menthol & Eucalyptus Sugarfree Gum (\$1.25 a pack, melandrose.com). If you have persistent halitosis, consider Blis K12 lozenges, like Now Foods OralBiotic Blis K12 (\$22 for 60 lozenges, now-2-u.com). These contain a probiotic that can suppress the growth of bad-breath bacteria.

**SHE SAID . . .** "He had a minty taste, with a hint of the flavor of his drink. He gently cupped my head, started out lightly . . . and then came the perfect tongue, his hands in my hair. I didn't care that we were in public. All I knew was that I wanted more."—Dawn, 41

## You're drooling like a hound dog

In your mind, any kind of moisture from her signals receptivity. But a flood of saliva coming from you just grosses her out. "I interviewed women about girl-on-girl experiences, and they all said, 'Oh, I'm not bisexual. I just enjoy kissing women because they don't slobber all over me,'" says Zdrok Wilson. "Women's kisses are gentler and more hygienically pleasant." Why do men prefer wetter kisses? "Men also assess women through kisses, but because men have reduced chemosensory detection, they may need more saliva to do that," says Susan Hughes, Ph.D., an evolutionary psychologist at Albright College, in Pennsylvania. Plus, since your saliva contains testosterone, you may be driven to swap spit to try to make her hornier faster.

**SMOOCH SAVER** A mouth as dry as the Gobi Desert is even worse than one primed with saliva, so you need to ease into the waterworks. "After a few minutes, when the kiss is more intense, women are less displeased by saliva," says Cane. "As she becomes more excited, her turn-ons change." Start with feathery kisses, lightly flicking the tips of your tongues together. "You'll produce less saliva that way," says Cane. "Plus, the tip of the tongue is very sensitive—it feels quite good." If French kissing is in your plans, think ahead and have a glass of water (or wine) handy. Taking an occasional swig can wash down excess saliva, he says.

**SHE SAID . . .** "He started slowly, with just the lips, and then moved to open-mouth kissing, darting just the tip of his tongue into my mouth. As things got a little heavier, he put his hands along my jawline and behind my head. Fresh breath, perfect technique."—Parisa, 26

## Your tongue is in her mouth . . . but it ain't moving

There are only two possible explanations for this: You're either lazy or inexperienced. It's the equivalent of a woman lying there, motionless, during sex. In other words, no one's fantasy.

**SMOOCH SAVER** Tongue is tricky. Too little says you're not into it. Too much says horny high-school boy. To strike a balance, imagine you're licking an ice-cream cone; this will help you establish an even pace and rhythm that doesn't overwhelm her. Venture outside her mouth, too, suggests Violet Blue, author of *Seal It with a Kiss*. Try tracing around her lips as if you're applying lip balm, or slowly teasing your tongue across other parts of her body—down her spine, say, or in circles on her neck, or around the rim of her ear. Don't forget your tongue's daytime role, either. Pause to whisper how sexy she is or how turned on you are. Verbal affirmation keeps her mentally tuned in.

**SHE SAID . . .** "It was slow, passionate, and sexy. He used the right amount of tongue—not overly wet—and explored not just my mouth but also my neck. His hands were on me the whole time. It was the hottest kiss I've ever experienced."—Ashley, 18

## You're in way too deep

Playing tonsil hockey feels aggressive, and not in a hot way. Forceful kissing only creates an artificial sense of passion, while slow, purposeful smooching yields the take-me-now lust you want to generate in her.

**SMOOCH SAVER** Instead of going deep, form an O with your lips around her tongue, and apply light suction as you ease in, says Blue. And tone down the vocals: Women are less likely than men to say that their partner's moaning makes a kiss hot, a 2007 study published in *Evolutionary Psychology* found. What does excite her: touching and caressing, the scientists say. "Your hands should never be idle during a kiss," says Zdrok Wilson. "Touch her face—women love that." It may be

tempting to venture down below with your hands, but don't. "The longer you can stay away from her genitals, the more aroused she'll become," Zdrok Wilson says.

**SHE SAID . . .** "He kissed my lips softly and pulled me close, and then rubbed my lower back as he kissed my neck. He let me know that he loved the way I smelled. Then he kissed me passionately."—Rhonda, 41

## She tells you what she likes, and you run with it—forever

Women appreciate it when you ask them what they want. But she's not handing you a one-act script. "Guys tend to be very literal, as in 'If she likes it, I'm going to focus on that one thing,'" says Zdrok Wilson. "When she tells you what she likes, try it out and gauge her reaction; you could be misinterpreting her." Even if you nibble her exactly the way she likes it, there's also a little thing called novelty. "A lot of women don't know what they like," she says. "And people get bored. It's about experimenting."

**SMOOCH SAVER** A new position may be the dose of novelty you need. Have her sit in front of you for a back massage. As you warm her up, kiss the nape of her neck, nibble across her shoulders, and then move up and down her neck. Women love neck play—and coming from an unexpected angle will heighten her pleasure, says Zdrok Wilson. (As her arousal grows, you can cup her breasts from behind.) Or if you're face-to-face, try this tantric technique: "Suck on her lower lip," Zdrok Wilson says. "A lot of women feel a direct connection, a tingling, in their clitoris when men do that." No woman can deny the pleasure in that.

**SHE SAID . . .** "I was in the kitchen cooking breakfast, and he came up behind me after his shower wearing only his boxers. He pinned me against the counter—his body was still hot. He grabbed my hands and put them behind my back, and his other hand was pulling my hair. He bit my bottom lip just a little to show he was in control. Of course, I never did finish cooking that breakfast."—Colleen, 22

## FIRST-KISS FUNDAMENTALS

We asked women what factors most influence their decision to pucker up

