

This Is the Only Time It's Okay to Hook Up With an Ex

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And when it's definitely not a good idea—ever.

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It's hard to quit anything cold turkey, and that includes an ex you had a long-term relationship with. So we totally get it if you find yourself thinking about having a no-strings-attached quickie with your former partner.

The appeal is obvious: You two already know each other, and it's easy to slide back into the sexual rhythm you used to enjoy. On the other hand, hooking up can blur boundaries and cause hell-a-confusion, especially when you're secretly doing it for the wrong reasons—like in the hopes of getting back together. (It happens, sure, but the odds are against you.)

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But if you're sure you don't have an ulterior motive, is it okay to booty call your ex for a casual hookup? We called in relationship experts—and as it turns out, you *can* get away with it, under certain conditions. Here's when it's okay, when it isn't, plus their rules for navigating the hookup without it blowing up in either of your faces.

When a hookup with an ex is okay

If enough time has gone by since you two split, and you don't think those old feelings for your ex will reignite, then you can probably green-light a booty call. "If you don't find yourself thinking about your ex anymore, and thinking of your ex with another person doesn't bother you, then this could be an indication that hooking up could be okay," Rachel Needle, PsyD, a psychologist in West Palm Beach, Florida and co-director of Modern Sex Therapy Institutes, tells *Health*.

As long as your feelings for your ex are water under the relationship bridge, and thinking about being together in bed doesn't launch uncontrollable sobbing, and you really understand and accept why you broke up in the first place, then it's fine—even sexually exciting—to revisit your old stomping grounds.

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Why is hooking up with someone you broke up with (or who broke your heart) even the slightest bit appealing? For some couples, the relationship fundamentally didn't work—yet sex was still passionate. Your ex more than likely knows how best to get you off, and you don't

have to deal with that first-time awkwardness that's inevitable when you hook up with someone new. "If you can have sex with an ex without any expectations, are emotionally ready, and do not have the warm and fuzzy feelings for them anymore, then it could be fun and enjoyable," says Needle.

New York-based sex therapist Sari Cooper, founder and director of the [Center for Love and Sex](#), agrees that timing has a lot to do with it. Heartache and regret tend to engulf you right after a breakup, so it's definitely not in your best interest to sleep with your ex too soon. Doing this "interferes with the mourning process and can begin a cycle of back and forth that causes more distress," warns Cooper. She suggests making sure it's been at least a year since the split, and that you have an understanding that this is either a one-off or a way of gaining closure.

The rules to follow to make it work

Chat about your expectations. You want to be on the same page about what it means (not much, just a fun sexual nostalgia trip, ideally) and what the expectations are moving forward. At the same time, you also need to have an honest conversation with yourself about your MO. "If there is even a little piece of you that is hoping something will be reignited, then it is probably not a good idea. Remind yourself why you broke up in the first place," says Needle.

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Let the past go. Don't revisit topics that were once hurtful, even if you're just kidding around. Certain subjects can touch a nerve, and the awkwardness and pain that might follow aren't worth the momentary bliss of an orgasm.

Forget about post-sex snuggling. Cuddling can send the wrong message, says Needle, or cause one or both of you to feel an emotional attachment again. Spooning, hand-holding, and even meaningful eye gazing after sex with your ex could lead to confusion or hurt. Fall asleep once the action is over, or take off and sleep in your own bed.

Refrain from drunk dialing. Kind of a no brainer, but it's worth repeating: You shouldn't hook up while drunk or under the influence when you aren't aware of your intention and may engage in behavior you regret later.

Don't go on dates. Doing couply things with your ex like you used to—staying home watching Netflix, or agreeing to attend a work or family function together—will make it hard to *not* second guess your feelings. Not to mention, it's weird for everyone in your social circle.

When it's definitely not a good idea

Do not hook up with your ex if you're not 100% over the relationship. And if you aren't sure you're over it, never use sex to test how you feel—you risk of confusing both parties and opening up an old wound. Because it's so hard to be sure about your feelings, some experts advise never having sex with an ex ever.

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"Leaving the door open, even for sex, can prevent someone from moving on or reflecting on what went wrong," sex therapist and assistant professor of psychiatry at UCLA School of Medicine [Kimberly Resnick Anderson](#) tells *Health*. She throws her support behind making a clean break. "Sometimes the insecurity of being single motivates people to return to something that was not growth promoting or, in some cases, even unhealthy," says Anderson.

That advice goes even if sex your ex was amazing, and you just want to experience it again, no strings attached. "If the sex itself was always great and this is the hardest part of giving up the relationship, it's not a good idea to go back just for the sex if it hinders your moving on to new healthier relationship," says Cooper.