

# Keeper or CLUNKER?

Your potential mate won't be perfect. But which flaws are worth ignoring, and what's too great to overlook? BY CLAIRE SULMERS

**M**ost women have an exhaustive (and unrealistic) list of traits they want in a man. And while searching for perfection, we may be bypassing good men. "The true keys to happy relationships are connection, loyalty and generosity, but some women eliminate men based on superficial things," says Alduan Tartt, Ph.D., a relationship coach and the author of *The Ring Formula: How to Marry Mr. Right* (Visionary Minds, Inc.). "Then again, there are also some women who are so desperate for a man, they ignore clear red flags." So is your boo's bad credit a deal breaker? What about that nosy baby mama? Or his criminal past? Our experts weigh in on whether top complaints about men warrant showing him some love—or the door.

## "He makes less money than me"

**SHOW HIM SOME LOVE:** "The measure of a man is the size of his heart, not his wallet," says Cooper Lawrence, author of *The Fixer-Upper Man: Convert Your Dud Into a Stud* (Polka Dot Press). As long as your man's a hard worker, cut him some slack.



Just the three of us?

## "He already has a child"

**IT DEPENDS:** Let time determine how comfortable you are hanging with his children, and observe how he interacts with his ex. But if his baby mama blows up his phone, tends to have emotional outbursts, or uses seeing his child as leverage for what she wants, then she's guaranteed to be worse with you in the picture. "Drama signals that the relationship is not over and will likely be a major headache for you," says Tartt. Encourage him to resolve their problems first and date you later.



An imperfect package doesn't automatically mean heartbreak.

## "He doesn't make me tingle"

**SHOW HIM SOME LOVE:** Since va-va-voom doesn't always happen immediately, give him a few dates to strike a chord if you like his personality. However, if nothing sparks after a month, it probably never will.

## "He has bad credit"

**IT DEPENDS:** The number one issue couples argue about is finances—but that can be fixed. Before you drop him, consider why your boyfriend has a less-than-perfect credit score. And if he's open to learning better money-management skills, help him. However, if he's unwilling to change or spending his whole paycheck on electronics or his car, you're better off without him.

## "He has a record"

**IT DEPENDS:** "Judge his character, not his past," says Lawrence. Consider the circumstances of his arrest or incarceration. Did he commit a minor offense? The answer can make a big difference. If he committed a major crime or is a current, habitual criminal, you should run. If you stay, expect collect calls, lonely nights and a partner who may not be able to financially support a family.

## "He's verbally abusive"

**SHOW HIM THE DOOR:** "This is a deal breaker," says Karen Sherman, Ph.D., a psychologist and the coauthor of *Marriage Magic! Find It, Keep It, and Make It Last* (Kardal). Don't stand for a man who abuses substances, hits you, or verbally assaults you. If he calls you names, puts you down, or makes you feel bad about yourself, he's got to go. Now.