

HOW TO SURVIVE A WORKPLACE ROMANCE



Do not tell colleagues.

Do not discuss any aspect of your relationship with anyone at work, even close friends. Avoid telltale references, such as, “When we were at the movies last night . . .” Do not play guessing games with co-workers, such as, “I’m going out with someone from the office but you’ll never guess who.”



Resist physical contact at the office.

Avoid all physical contact, including kissing, hand-holding, hugging, casual touching, and back rubs, even if you think you are alone. Maintain at least a foot of personal space between you and the person you are dating.



Send gifts to the home.

Do not have flowers, candy, clothing, or other personal items sent to the office, even with an unsigned card: People will begin asking questions.



Do not use company e-mail to send personal notes.

Many employers monitor e-mail messages, and even deleted messages are stored. It is also too easy to send an e-mail to the wrong person or to “everyone.”



Avoid physical contact in the office, even when you think no one else is looking.



Avoid long or excessive lunch dates.

While it is acceptable for colleagues to eat together, extended or repeated outings may attract notice. Maintain the lunch routine you practiced before you started dating your co-worker.



Avoid arriving and departing together.

Unless you are in a car pool with others, stagger your arrival and departure times.



Use discretion.

At company picnics or parties, or at off-site meetings, do not drink excessively, dance intimately, or openly display affection with your office significant other.

Be Aware

- Most office romances begin in the spring.
- Dating more than one person from the same company at the same time is not a good idea.

THE BREAK-UP



Do not break up at work.

Emotions can be difficult to hide, and people can act irrationally when they are upset. The workplace, especially in a cubicle but even in a private office, is a poor choice of location for a confrontation. Avoid breaking up over lunchhour, as well.



Break up over a long weekend.

Choose a time when your partner will have several days to heal before having to see you at the office. Try to be sensitive to his or her feelings, however: Do not break up just before the other person leaves on an extended vacation.



Be prepared for the worst.

A bad break-up may require you to transfer or even resign, particularly if you are dating someone above you in the office hierarchy. Ending a relationship with someone who reports to you could lead to a charge of sexual discrimination.



Do not immediately begin dating someone else at work.

Your new relationship may be hurtful to your ex, if you are spotted. You may also gain a reputation for being opportunistic or desperate.



Do not discuss personal feelings or emotions with your ex while at work.

If you want to check on how your former lover is doing, call at home.

Be Aware

No matter what you call it—fishing off the company pier, mentoring the intern, kissing company cousins, refilling the toner, mergers and acquisitions—office romances are dangerous.