

8 SIMPLE RULES FOR DATING MY EX-WIFE

BY DAVID OWEN

I share the blame for my divorce. I did a lot of things wrong in my marriage: worked too hard, cared too much, made too many sacrifices for my family. Tore my heart out and left it lying on the kitchen floor so that anybody who wasn't too busy stabbing me in the back could stomp it into the no-wax vinyl tiles that I myself laid down at a savings of more than two thousand dollars. I am guilty of that and more.

But forget it. Past is past. Let's move on. You are now dating my ex-wife, and her lawyer, my lawyer, and a state judge have all informed me in writing that you have a legal right to do so. So be it. I'm not a blackmailing pickpocket doubletalking divorce attorney, so I don't know the technicalities. But the two of us still need to have some kind of ground rules here:

1. Twenty-two years, pal. That's how long we were married. You've been dating her for a month. Tell you what. In twenty-one years and eleven months, let's you and me talk again.

2. Despite what you may have been told, I've got some self-respect left, and I don't need to have your face shoved into my face every time I turn around. From five o'clock on Friday afternoon until two o'clock on Sunday morning, the bar at the Ramada Inn belongs to me.

3. The oil in the Saturn wagon gets changed every three thousand miles—not five thousand miles, not seven thousand miles, not ten thousand miles—and I don't care what she or the owner's manual or the guy in the service department or the Internet says. Three. Thousand. God. Damned. Miles.

4. The Wiffle ball hanging from the string in the right-hand bay of the garage is where the middle of the front of the hood of the Saturn wagon should be pointed when it's parked correctly. The

Wiffle ball is not supposed to rest on the hood of the car. You aim at the ball. It makes parking easier.

5. The two of you don't walk together within a thousand feet of the golf course or the driving range. Not ever.

6. Before you even ask, allow me to explain why there's no cable TV. To install cable TV, they have to drill a hole through the house. Hey, fine, so let's get satellite TV instead. Well, guess what? To install satellite TV, they have to drill about twenty holes through the roof. Somebody ought to get the Nobel Prize for that idea—drilling holes through the roof.

7. The band saw in the basement belongs to me. You are not to use it, you are not to move it, you are not to put anything on it or let anyone else put anything on it, including even just one corner of a laundry basket while the person carrying the laundry basket scratches their nose. I can't remove the band saw from the basement just yet. For one thing, I don't have a workshop to put it in anymore, and if you're interested in knowing why I suggest you study the terms of my divorce. For another thing, I assembled that band saw myself. When I got the box home from Sears, I thought, Hey, great, I'll just lift out my brand-new band saw and start ripping pressure-treated railroad ties, but guess what? The box didn't contain a band saw. The box contained a large plastic bag filled with medium-sized plastic bags filled with small plastic bags filled with parts the size of bird shot. Putting that thing together took three solid months of the best years of my life, and to make the blade cut plumb I had to level the legs with a laser transit that I borrowed from a friend of mine who's a contractor. So hands the hell off.

8. This should go without saying, but—no funny business. Understood? She's fifty years old, for crying out loud. ♦

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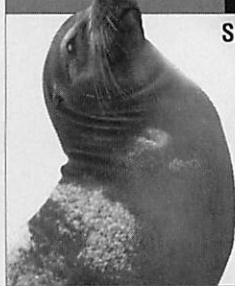


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