

Part 1. Read the four statements below. Which would genuinely put you off? Which seem completely unreasonable?

"He talked about his fantasy football team for 20 minutes."	"She said 'no worries' four times in one text."
"He ran to catch the bus."	"She laughed at her own joke before finishing it."

Part 2. Read the list below. Next to each one, write Y (yes, this would genuinely give you the ick), N (no, this wouldn't bother me), or D (depends). Don't discuss yet.

- The way they laugh
- How they text (e.g. "k" instead of "okay")
- Talking about their ex within the first five minutes
- A strange or off-putting walk
- Being rude to waiting staff
- Oversharing on the first date
- Talking with their mouth full
- Excessive use of a particular phrase or word
- How they eat
- Being "too" enthusiastic, too soon

Now compare with a partner. Where do you agree? Where are you surprised by the difference?

Part 3. Choose one option in each pair and explain your choice.

A partner with a strange laugh	or	a partner with strange table manners?
An ick you can get over	or	an ick that's a genuine dealbreaker?
Something they do	or	something they say?
An ick on a first date	or	an ick after months together?
Judging someone for an ick	or	admitting your own icks are irrational?
A tiny ick that ends things	or	ignoring a big red flag because there's no ick?

Part 4. Read the four statements below. In pairs, invent the tiniest, most ridiculous possible reason for each one.

- "She said it wasn't one big thing. It was one specific moment, and she still can't fully explain it."
- "He couldn't tell you exactly when it happened. One day everything was fine. The next, something had just... shifted."
- "They'd been together eight months. Then one dinner, one comment, and something closed."
- "She knew it was ridiculous. She knew it shouldn't matter. But it did."

Share your best (or worst) invented reason with the class.

Part 5. In small groups, agree on an order for the icks below, from 1 (totally reasonable to be put off by this) to 8 (wildly irrational).

Wearing socks with sandals	Taking a photo of their food before eating it
Saying “no worries” after literally everything	Doing an exaggerated “baby voice” sometimes
Being overly formal in text messages	Checking their phone constantly during a conversation
Having a very specific taste in music they won’t stop talking about	Standing a little too close when they talk

Part 6. Read the situations. Choose the response closest to how you’d actually behave. Then discuss what your choice reveals.

You’ve been messaging someone for two weeks. Things are going well. Then they send a voice note, and something about their voice completely changes how you feel.

1. *You feel the ick instantly and can’t explain why.*
2. *You tell yourself you’re being ridiculous and carry on.*
3. *You replay the voice note to check if you really feel that way.*
4. *You mention it to a friend, half-joking, half-serious.*

On a first date, the food arrives. Before eating, they take a photo of the plate for social media.

1. *Mild ick, but not enough to end things.*
2. *You find it charming, actually.*
3. *You quietly judge them for the rest of the date.*
4. *You do the exact same thing, so you can’t really talk.*

Part 7. Read the statements. Say whether you agree, disagree, or partly agree.

- The ick is always at least a little irrational.
- Once you feel it, there's no going back.
- People use "the ick" as an excuse to avoid deeper issues in a relationship.
- Everyone has at least one ick they're slightly embarrassed about.
- You can talk yourself out of an ick if the person is otherwise great.
- The ick says more about the person feeling it than the person causing it.

Part 8. Read the two viewpoints. Which is closer to what you actually think?**Viewpoint A**

The ick is real, and it matters. Attraction isn't fully rational, and small details can be genuine signals – about compatibility, about values, even about character. Dismissing it as shallow ignores how much instinct actually gets right.

Viewpoint B

The ick is mostly nonsense, and treating it seriously is a mistake. It's usually about our own insecurities or unrealistic standards, not the other person's real qualities. Taking it too seriously means dismissing genuinely good people over something meaningless.

Part 9. Tell your partner about your worst ick – real or imagined, yours or someone else's. Try to use at least three phrases from Part 2.**Think about:**

- What the tiny thing actually was
- Whether it was fair, looking back
- Whether you've ever felt guilty about an ick
- Whether anyone's ever admitted an ick about you

Reflection

Complete the sentences in your own words.

1. My most irrational ick is...
2. An ick I've gotten over, eventually, is...
3. I do / don't think icks are worth taking seriously, because...
4. If someone told me their ick was something I do, I would...