



how to be
GOOD
at
SEX



We know what you're thinking: I have a vagina—of course I'm good at sex! But what makes a woman *good* good? We've got answers... so you can start overachieving.

by Erin Zammett Ruddy

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS CRAYMER

WHEN YOU FIRST started having sex (say, for instance, senior prom night, Southampton Motor Inn, Drakkar Noir wafting through the air), you didn't have to be *good*; you just had to be *there*. Back then you scored 100 percent for attendance alone. Anything else was extra credit. But now that you're older and wiser (and not, presumably, in the backseat of a smelly Honda), you may find yourself wanting to step up your game—for him and for you. "Being good at sex isn't about men; it's about owning your sexuality," says Amy Levine, a New York City sex coach. "It's powerful to be great at something that brings you pleasure. It's amazing how many women don't realize that." So what does make a woman good in bed? Listen as women who are fill you in. (They know 'cause guys have told them!) To excel, they say, you need to...

**BE GOOD *at*
BEING SELFISH**

It's a fact: The more you enjoy sex, the more he'll enjoy it. "Men get more aroused and have better sexual function when their partner is truly into sex," says Linda Banner, Ph.D., a clinical sex researcher in San Jose, California. So do whatever it takes to get you there: "You can't expect him to make the sex good for you—you have to make it good for you," advises Michelle,* 34, a New York City publicist who credits her healthy sexual ego to her upbringing. "I was taught to respect my body, and sex was never a taboo subject." That confidence means she has never been afraid to get what she wants. "A woman's biggest mistake in the bedroom is not acting the way most guys act: selfish," Michelle says. "I am definitely assertive in bed. I'll say, 'I want to do it this way tonight' or, 'Put your hand here, and do it like this.' I've heard from guys that I'm the best they've ever been with because: (A) telling him what you like in the heat of the moment is hot, and (B) he knows if he takes care of me, I'm going to take care of him right back." Like Michelle, Elizabeth, 33, told us she isn't afraid to actually show him what works for her: "I get on top, lean back and touch myself. He has a full view of everything, which guys love, and I know I'm going to orgasm—it's a win-win." *Continued on next page* ➤

*Some names have been changed.

BE GOOD *at* NOT THINKING

Another common denominator among women who get told they're the best? They don't spend the whole time in bed *thinking* about being the best. In fact, "when I'm having sex, I'm not thinking at all," says Alexis, 26, an Austin, Texas-based blogger. "I'm not wondering if he's into it, not obsessing about my body—I just let the moment take me." Banner agrees: "You've got to give yourself permission to be sexual and sensual," she says. "A lot of women are afraid to go there. But good sex is not about following a script; it's about letting go and abandoning your inhibitions." Alexis learned to do that with the help of some great partners, including a few women. During a wild phase in college, she tried

a handful of threesomes. "Seeing how other women have sex—what they sound like, what they look like, what it takes for them to climax—made me more accepting of what I do in bed because I realized how normal I am," she says. "I've been told by men that I set the bar really high, which is always nice to hear. Feeling confident is definitely the secret sauce."

BE GOOD *at* APPRECIATING HIM

We know it sounds so retro, so "how to please your man," but all sexual creatures need compliments. Guys, too. "After we're finished, I single out one thing he did that felt really great and tell him

so," says Christine, 32. "It makes him happy to know he made me happy, and it ensures he'll do that thing again!" Feeling shy? Appreciative noises work too. "I have mastered the art of the well-timed moan," says Victoria, 29. "Men like to know when they are doing a good job—a nice butt grab also does the trick." Allie, 35, makes sure she never takes her hand off the body of the guy she's with, no matter what they're doing: "When we're kissing, when we're switching positions, when I'm down below, *always*," she says. "It lets him know we're connected, that I'm glad to be with him, and it's really hot."

BE GOOD *at*, WELL, TRYING

You know how fitness experts are always telling you to avoid workout ruts by changing things up? Same goes for sex. Only instead of spin class, try, say, stand-up doggy. Or wearing thigh-highs. Or *anything* that requires a little effort. "I'm really good at going down on a guy," says Rebecca, 33. "I know this because they tell me during, after and way after. I spend a lot of time down there and use the techniques I've picked up over the years. Most guys tell me they can see how much I enjoy it, which turns them on even more."

Sometimes just putting your own spin on the go-to motions can make you a legend, women tell us. "Just as my guy is about to finish, I squeeze my pelvic floor muscles," says Marie, 35. "When I first did this—after reading about it in a *Glamour* story—he went crazy. Now he begs me to do it all the time." Lisa, 28, likes to spruce up good old missionary. "When he's on top, I scoot my head, shoulders and upper back off the edge of the bed so he gets an amazing view of my boobs. It makes me feel super sexy, and guys tell me it makes them feel like they're in a porn film—in a good way."

While some women do seem to be born with a sexual *je ne sais quoi*, any woman can learn to be good at sex. And she *should*, says Levine. "When we're sexually satisfied, we're happier and healthier, and actually tend to adopt a take-charge attitude that helps us get what we want out of life." Call it the "I'm good at sex" swagger. "When I first started having amazing sex, I felt like I had the best secret," says Janelle, 31. "I'd be brushing my teeth and think, Wow, you're good." Let's all have what she's having! ■

"I Was Bad at Sex!"

One woman makes the ultimate confession. Find out how Autumn Whitefield-Madrano turned things around.

It was 1992, and with *The Little Mermaid* on in the background, my high school boyfriend and I indulged in a little makeout session. Around the time Ariel lost her voice, I found mine—sighs and moans I believed indicated things were going swimmingly on my end. I was 15 and fully clothed, but I could still express my pleasure, right?

"Why are you being so loud?" my boyfriend asked, pulling away. "It sounds like you're acting." OK, we'd met at theater camp, so it wasn't an entirely unfair accusation. But I *hadn't* been acting. I'd been having fun. Oops.

Feeling ashamed, I shut my mouth—and kept it closed for years. I lost my virginity with nary a peep, made it through college à la Marcel Marceau and stayed tongue-tied through a romantic

European jaunt with a man I loved (and a few romps with ones I didn't). It wasn't that I didn't enjoy myself. It was just that I was doing so *very* quietly. For some women, that's just fine—but, hey, I'm a Gemini. The silence wasn't me.

When things with Mr. Jaunt ended, I sought solace in the arms (OK, bed) of an old friend. As I reveled in my post-orgasm bliss, he turned to me, clearly let down. "What can I do to help you climax?" he asked. Huh? I *had* climaxed, but the poor guy had no idea. It was then that I saw I wasn't just robbing my partners of passion (and any semblance of assurance that they were doing things right); I was robbing myself. The only person my mute state had benefited was a 15-year-old boy.

My friend with benefits helped me realize I had a right to express

myself in bed: whispers, giggles and the occasional yelp included.

Interestingly, my rehab began not in the bedroom but at the gym (baby steps, people!). Mid-biceps curl, I let out a sigh that sounded alarmingly like something from adult cinema. I started to think that the way out of worrying about "performing" was to take cues from times I knew I wasn't. It worked: Realizing it's not sounds that are unnatural but holding them in allowed me to start spilling forth in more risqué situations.

I loosened up just in time. I met a guy I had a hunch I'd be with for a while; since we were in no rush, we indulged in a bit of pillow talk before finally doing the deed. "What do you think it'll be like?" I asked. "I picture lots of laughing," he said. I didn't disappoint.