

how to spot a *speed dater*

Gone straight from the first kiss to fave baby names? It may be time to pull the handbrake.

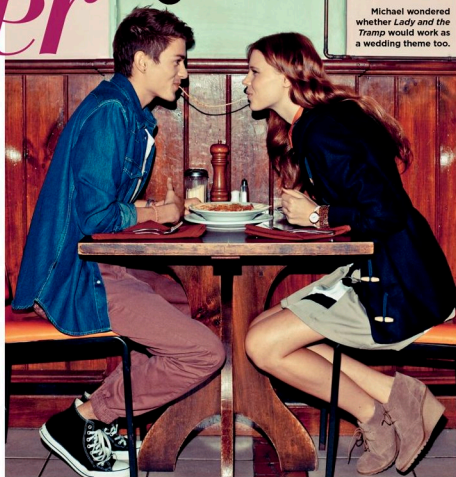
Meeting a dude who's head over heels for you is super flattering, right? But if he barely knows you and is becoming more attached than you are to your GHD, it might not be so great. That's what Sienna, 24, found when she started dating Luke*. "I was excited by how forthcoming he was. But a couple of weeks in, he left his toothbrush at my place and was putting pressure on me to label our relationship," she says.

hit the accelerator

Rom-coms have taught us that, yes, love at first sight is totally possible, but the less romantic reality is that his behaviour might be due to low self-esteem. "He may have developed this 'need for speed' in his earlier relationships, where it was necessary to make sure those he cared about stuck around," explains relationship counsellor and sex therapist Christina Spaccavento (sydneysextherapists.com.au). "Or he might be seeking your validation for his 'good' behaviour."

get into neutral

If he's throwing around words like 'love' and 'forever' after only a short while, it might be wise to take a quick time-out. Realistically, a genuine loving bond will



Michael wondered whether *Lady and the Tramp* would work as a wedding theme too.

take a lot longer than a few weeks to develop. "Relationships are based on couples developing a strong bond in all areas - interpersonally, emotionally, spiritually, sexually, mentally, intellectually and physically. Both partners need to be equally committed," says Spaccavento.

slam on the brakes

Letting love unfold slowly is clearly a notion Luke isn't familiar with. After the toothbrush incident, he began paying surprise visits to Sienna's house and talking to her about meeting his parents.

"I felt suffocated. We had just started dating, why rush it?" says Sienna. So how do you tell a speed dater that his crazy-in-love attitude is more off-putting than Chris Brown's Twitter feed? Keep it casual. "Use phrases like, 'I love where we're at right now and I feel like I want to take things slowly and give us the chance to really get to know each other.' This delivers the message in a gentle, compassionate way," Spaccavento says. If you approach the issue lightly, there's a better chance he'll take your feelings on board without feeling too deflated. After all, slow and steady wins the race! □