

## Why Cupid's arrow takes a year to hit its target of true love

By Patrick Barkham  
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Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight? From Christopher Marlowe to Kylie, artists have spent centuries falling for it. Now scientists beg to differ: rather than being struck by thunderbolts of passion on first meeting, couples take up to a year to find true love.

Researchers at Bath University have concluded that "consummate love", defined as a balance of passion, intimacy and commitment, takes around 12 months to develop in a relationship. Surprisingly, their findings were based on studying couplings forged via a dating website. Of the 147 couples from the online agency [Match.com](http://Match.com) who participated in the study, 61% showed that their relationships had high levels of intimacy, passion and commitment. Nearly all of these couples had been in their relationship for 12 months or longer. But the females of our species, it seems, are better at fending off cupid's arrow: men were more likely to experience true love than women, with 67% of men and 57% of women said to be savouring consummate love.

Women were more likely to experience "liking" compared with men (9% and 2% respectively). Companionate love, a relationship with high levels of intimacy and commitment, but lower levels of passion, was the next most frequently experienced form of love, exhibited by 16% of the study group. The early stages of a relationship often reveals what the scientists call "nonlove" - indicating low levels of intimacy, passion and commitment.

"Love is an important predictor of success, stability and relationship satisfaction," said Jeff Gavin. "Love is a multifaceted concept, but is viewed in our study as the combined feelings of intimacy, passion and commitment that one has for a partner. To date, there has been no systematic study of love in the context of relationships formed via online dating sites, but with the popularity of online dating it is imperative that we understand the factors that influence satisfaction in relationships formed in this way."

Charlotte Harper, UK managing director of [Match.com](http://Match.com), said: "It supports our belief that the internet and email does in fact encourage old-fashioned courtship ... that is all too infrequent when meeting potential partners on the bar scene."