

Where Is This Relationship? A Stage Check

The argument is never actually about the stage. It is about a weekend booked four months ahead, or a reply that took a day and a half, or the word partner turning up in front of somebody's colleagues. Underneath most of it sits a plain factual disagreement about where this is. One of you is operating at the stage above, the other at the stage below, and both of you are behaving perfectly sensibly for the stage you believe you are in.

Who this is for: You are three months into something good and cannot tell whether you are being impatient, whether they are being evasive, or whether neither of you has checked.

The five stages

Getting to know each other (four boxes)

Everything before there is a pattern you can rely on.

We have met in person more than three times. (tick)

Contact between meetings does not depend on me starting it. (tick)

Plans get made in advance rather than on the day. (tick)

Nothing has been defined, and at this stage that is normal. (tick)

Consistent but undefined (five boxes)

A reliable rhythm with nothing said out loud about it.

We see each other on a predictable rhythm. (tick)

I could say what next weekend probably looks like. (tick)

They have introduced me to at least one person in their life. (tick)

A difficult topic has come up at least once and did not end it. (tick)

How long we have been at this stage, in months:

Defined and exclusive (five boxes)

One conversation separates this from the stage below.

One of us said it out loud and the other agreed. (tick)

Not seeing other people was stated rather than assumed. (tick)

I have met friends properly, not by accident in a group. (tick)

We have made a plan more than a month ahead. (tick)

There has been an argument followed by a repair. (tick)

Building a shared life (five boxes)

Logistics rather than feelings, and the first real test.

We have handled something practical together: illness, money, a move. (tick)

I have things at their place, or they have things at mine. (tick)

Family knows, on both sides. (tick)

We have talked about a year from now in concrete terms. (tick)

Our calendars assume each other. (tick)

Established (four boxes)

Survived something, and planned around by both of you.

We have been through something difficult and are still here. (tick)

Decisions get made jointly by default. (tick)

Neither of us treats leaving as a live option during an argument. (tick)

A commitment exists that would cost something to undo. (tick)

Which stage you are actually in

One rule, stricter than most people want it to be.

Highest stage with every box ticked:

Highest stage with any box ticked:

The gap between those two, in stages:

The missing box that is closest to being ticked:

When the two of you land on different stages

A one-stage gap and a two-stage gap are different problems.

My stage ____, their stage as far as I can tell ____

The specific box we would disagree about:

What I want, said as a box rather than as a feeling:

What I will do if the gap is still there in three months:

This worksheet is free to print, photocopy and share, including with clients. It is self-reflection material, not a diagnosis, an assessment or a substitute for professional support. If a relationship involves fear, control or coercion, or if working through this raises more than feels manageable, please speak to a doctor, a therapist or a domestic abuse service.