

How to Fall in Love

Step 1: Laugh.

He told a forced joke, and she laughed anyway. She let her head fly back like a little kid.

Step 2: Get caught in the rain.

He reached in his backpack for an umbrella. She laughed at him, and grabbed it and ran. They sprinted in the rain. She cut through a muddy field, spraying it up her leg. He chased her. They raced to the door. He let her win, and she knew. She handed him back the umbrella and smiled, pointing down at a dry spot on his shirt. She said the rain missed a spot. He looked down, and she flicked his nose and ran up the stairs.

Step 3: Notice things.

It snowed for the first time that year. She stuck her tongue out and tried to catch falling snowflakes, spinning in little circles. She scrunched up her nose and laughed when one floated into her eye. He watched. She caught him.

Step 4: Go on walks.

The trees were only half-covered now and she hopped between empty spaces on the sidewalk, carefully avoiding the fallen leaves. She rubbed her hands together. He offered to warm them up for her, reaching out his hand. She said he was cheesy, but she wrapped her fingers around his and squeezed, smiling faintly.

Step 5: Dance.

A song that they loved blared through the speakers in the basement of a party. She grabbed his hand and ran down the stairs, dragging him on the dance floor. She danced like she was mocking the song and living by it at the same time. He hated dancing, but danced anyway. They got lost in the song and the next and the next.

Step 6: Take chances.

Everyone else had gone to bed, but they were still awake, watching a rerun of a discontinued television show. She reached down and grabbed a nickel that was lying on the floor, told him to pick a side. He chose tails. She said if she lost, she would kiss him on the cheek. She flipped the coin. He won. She leaned in but he turned his head and kissed her on the lips. She said that he tricked her, laughed and kissed him again.

Step 7: Say goodnight.

She got drunk with friends and called him. He came to her room and watched her struggle with her keys, heard her slur her words. He laughed at how silly she was. She kissed him. He made popcorn and they took turns trying to catch it in their mouths until she fell asleep on the futon. He let himself out.

Step 8: Don't follow the steps.

She wanted to make cake for his birthday. He offered to help, but she said no, but he did anyway. She added the eggs, milk, vanilla extract. He added the flour, butter, sugar. They both forgot to add the baking soda. The cake was a dense brick when it came out of the oven. She

made him a bowl of oatmeal instead and shoved a candle in. He said it was the best birthday cake he had ever seen. She laughed and got the camera.