

# Red, green & beyond: Exploring the colour-coded language of modern love

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*When uncertain, they end up waving a white flag and surrendering the connection, a situation the study describes as the "Dating Traffic Jam" Image: DrAfter123 (Getty)*

**The rise of color-coded 'flags' on social media, from red to beige, has transformed how people view relationship dynamics. This article explores real-life perspectives, the positives and negatives, and expert opinions.**

"My girlfriend's beige flag is that she will bounce. She's happy? Bouncing. Wants ice cream? Bouncing like a child. Wants a hug? Bouncing. Receives a gift? Bouncing. I am dating a damn ball." TikTok user @iahatesphoebe shared, describing her girlfriend's beige flag – being a living ball on the platform.

Another TikTok user Ramona Gabriella shared: "My man's beige flag is he never asks for details. His brother is on vacation. Where? He doesn't know. His best friend is getting married. When? He didn't ask." A popular beige flag in men many women on the platform seem to have concerns about. While men on the app argue they are merely simple beings...Well that's a debate for another day.

Described as unusual, quirky traits that are mildly annoying, beige flags are neither positive nor negative. These hilariously bizarre 'beige' flags are one of the more recent

entrants into the realm of modern dating and its colour coded system of relationship flags.



## The colour-coded dating framework

Another lesser known flag making the rounds on social media is the 'pink flag.' As [Refinery29](#) explains, "While red flags refer to signs that should have us running for the nearest exit, pink flags aren't as obvious. They're the subtle characteristics that don't quite sit well with us but are still minor enough that we convince ourselves they're something we can deal with." For instance, a pink flag might be that a partner is still best friends with their ex or is extremely frugal. Potentially concerning, it's likely these can be addressed with open communication.

Behaviours and nuances that were once analysed through careful observation and months or years of being together are now quickly identified and categorised using these colour coded terms: A "red flag" referring to toxic or problematic behaviour, while a "green flag" celebrates emotionally healthy, positive traits. Newer additions alongside beige and pink flags are "yellow flags" that indicate warning signs yet are not deal breakers.

## Real-life perspectives

Emily McGuirk, 26-year-old media professional and student, shared how red and green flags have helped her set boundaries in relationships: "To me, using red and green flags as a framework has helped me set boundaries when forming relationships both platonic and romantic with other people. It is a quite a binary way of forming connections but it has worked for me as it helps me understand in simple terms whether I connect with someone or not."

On the other hand, Mark Kidsley, 35-year-old photographer, initially skeptical of the flag system now sees its value: "At first I thought it would make it more complicated, because I think you should just go with the flow in a relationship but upon thinking about it a little more I think it's actually a good idea. It does help you realise what you want out of a relationship, whether it's good for you or things are likely to become a problem in the future."

## The peculiar world of modern dating & social media influence

The world of modern [dating](#) is more peculiar than ever, with a meticulous colour coded system now in place. TikTok and Instagram reels are flooded with fascinatingly unique contemporary romance concepts aka red flags, pink flags, love bombing, breadcrumbing and more.

Originally developed as tools to identify healthy and unhealthy relationship dynamics particularly in counselling and therapy, thanks to social media platforms the flag

terminologies have made their way into our everyday lives.



Hashtags like #RedFlags and #GreenFlags have amassed millions of views on TikTok, transforming what were once distinct psychological discussions into viral trends in mainstream dating culture. Creators share personal anecdotes with humour and relatability in bite sized videos or memes to highlight “flags” in relationships.

### **Is it possible that we are overthinking love?**

But has the internet and the plethora of these buzzwords made matters of the heart even more confusing or are they aiding singles to dodge future disappointments?

In 2024, Tinder, the globally acclaimed dating app commissioned an international study titled ‘[The Green Flags Study](#)’ surveying 8000 heterosexual men and women aged 18-34 across Canada, USA, UK and Australia. The main finding revealed that nearly all participating men (91%) and women (94%) agree that dating is more difficult now.

The study also pinpointed that young people are judging the opposite sex’s behaviours in stereotypical ways.

“Men and women are misjudging each other’s intentions in stereotypical ways.” shared Dr. Sara Konrath, social psychologist at Indiana University. “Such stereotypes can be damaging to relationships. Staying curious and asking questions can help dig beyond the surface and lead to deeper connections.”

Additionally, a leading issue survey respondents highlighted in the study was the difficulty in quickly determining whether their potential partner was exhibiting red or green flag traits. When uncertain, they end up waving a white flag and surrendering the connection, a situation the study describes as the “Dating Traffic Jam”

### **Why are we so focused on dissecting behaviour based on flags?**

Anjum Piracha, a psychologist working with the [NHS](#) explained why these behaviours are being dissected more than ever before:

“We are now more aware of our feelings, emotions, needs, behaviours and the impact of them. Everyone is now talking about mental health. We express ourselves in terms of how it makes us feel, more than we used to. Social media has a big part to play in it too making these phrases so overused that they’ve just become a part of our vocabulary.”

But is it worth it that we are labelling and restricting the beauty and complexities of human connections like this?

Piracha sheds light on the above dilemma: "It's about two individuals who are coming together with their own baggage trying to figure out whether they're compatible. Having the vocabulary to define something in this case, a red or green flag is helpful because it gives you a level of self-awareness."

### Trusting your gut instinct

But Piracha cautions against over labelling and justifying behaviours: "Problems occur when you don't listen to that gut instinct and you try to justify the behaviours. The most important thing in relationships is to rely on your gut instinct. Do not ignore it."

"Green flags are traits that you like, that make you feel good, make you feel secure in a relationship. So it's your gut feeling making you feel secure and happy. A red flag is anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, you may see someone talk to someone else in an aggressive way, so your gut will be in a state of discomfort. But that means that person has that sort of aggression in them."

### What can we do?

What do you think are the flags in your [relationships](#) that stand out to you? Do you believe this growing reliance on trending concepts from social media is guiding us to be more self aware? Or is it just adding more to the noise in an already fast-paced dating world and setting us up to be hyper critical?

Perhaps for starters, the next time we're on a date we should resist the urge to overthink and let our gut instinct be our compass instead.

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