

# Is it Ever OK To Check Your Partner's Phone? Marriage Therapists Weigh In.

In a survey, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 5 men admitted to doing so.

[Kelsey Borresen](#)



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These days, [snooping on your partner](#) is easier than ever.

With your S.O.'s smartphone in hand and a few finger taps, you can access their texts, emails, Instagram DMs, search history and a whole lot more. But just because you can quickly and easily obtain this information – and as

tempting as that might be – you shouldn't necessarily do it.

A lot of people seem to be snooping anyway, though: According to a [2014 survey by Avast](#), an antivirus software company, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 5 men copped to secretly checking their partner's phone.

We asked marriage therapists to tell us what this kind of snooping means for a relationship and how to deal if you or your partner is guilty of it.

## **Why People Do It**

As you might expect, this kind of behavior often points to a lack of trust in the relationship.

“It says that you don't trust that what your partner tells and shows you is who they really are,” [psychologist Ryan Howes](#) told HuffPost. “And that their true self is reflected in their communication and searches on their phone.”

People often go through their partner's phone because they're worried about what [secrets or illicit activity](#) he or she might be hiding. But snooping on the sly is only perpetuating more secretive behavior in the relationship.

“When people sneak a peek at their partner's phone, it feeds secrecy and distrust into the relationship, both of which are likely to be the primary reasons the person is checking in the first place,” said [Kurt Smith](#), a therapist who specializes in counseling men. “So while this may seem in the moment as a good idea and justified, it only creates more of the problems that need to be resolved.”

## **There is a lack of communication or problems with intimacy.**

Psychologist and [sex therapist Shannon Chavez](#) told HuffPost that checking a partner's phone may also be tied to issues around intimacy and communication. If the couple isn't open with one another, problems are left unaddressed and suspicions begin to fester. Rather than confronting the

issues head-on, the spying partner might feel the need to do some digging because it seems easier than having a potentially tense conversation.

“The problem is that checking a partner’s phone has become easier than being vulnerable and sharing how you are feeling and why you feel compelled to check the phone,” Chavez said.

And if your partner hasn’t been particularly forthcoming with you lately – maybe he or she seems off but you can’t figure out why – you might look through their phone for answers as to what they’re thinking or feeling.

“There might be a curiosity of what is going on in their life if they are not communicating as much with you,” Chavez added.

### **Partners are insecure or suspect there may be infidelity.**

Really think about why you’re feeling suspicious of your partner or insecure about the relationship overall. Does your partner have a history of lying and cheating? Has he or she given you a reason to think they might be hiding something?

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“It could mean that you have tangible evidence that your partner is being deceptive,” Howes said. “Maybe there have been concrete examples of this from the past, or maybe you know they have a history of infidelity or porn addiction. You’re searching because you want confirmation that they are being deceitful or that they aren’t.”

But it’s also possible that your partner hasn’t given you any reason to doubt them and you find yourself feeling paranoid anyway. If you’ve [dated a liar or a cheater in the past](#), you could be carrying the pain of that betrayal into the new relationship, perhaps unfairly.

“You bring an irrational fear into the relationship that they aren’t really honest and/or committed to you,” Howes said. “If you don’t have any evidence to suggest otherwise, and you search anyway, you’re probably the one intruding on their privacy and doing damage to the relationship. Your fears may be more based in your self-esteem, your capacity for intimacy, or your history of being deceived in past relationships.”

## **So, Is It Ever OK?**

The long and short of it: No, it’s generally not OK. It’s a violation of your partner’s privacy and a breach of trust – not to mention, it’s often unproductive: You might find nothing and then feel like a jerk for snooping. You might find something small and innocent and blow it out of proportion. Or you might actually find something incriminating, but then you have to ask yourself: Was this *really* the most honorable way of getting the information?

“It is an invasion of privacy and property,” Chavez said. “To check a phone without consent shows that there is a communication breakdown. Looking for something on your partner’s phone without permission immediately breaks trust to fulfill your own needs. It leads to suspicions and assumptions that trigger insecurities and upset.”

In some relationships, both partners may mutually decide to give each other free rein to go through each other’s phones. If the parameters are set together and agreed upon, then this arrangement might work well for some couples. That said, wanting to maintain some privacy, even while in a relationship, is perfectly reasonable and even healthy.

“This [arrangement] certainly can help with trust and reliability, but the fact remains that many people in relationships desire a bit of their own benign independence,” Howes said. “This isn’t to say they want to separate. They often love their relationships and want them to endure, but they also want a little bit of their lives to themselves – and this isn’t necessarily a problem.”

A relationship built on trust allows for both partners to have connections to people outside the relationship – friends, coworkers, family members.

“These are the healthiest couples, because they don’t feel threatened by their partner’s independence,” Howes added.

### **Some Advice For Couples:**

If you’re still feeling compelled to look through your partner’s phone, Smith recommends taking a hard look at what’s driving you to snoop.

“Ask yourself: What am I trying to accomplish? Does this approach really improve things? How can I do this in a way that would build trust rather than create distrust?” Smith said.

And if you believe your partner has been snooping on your phone, try to bring up your concerns in a mature, non-accusatory way.

“Addressing secrecy and dishonesty head-on is necessary to support a healthy relationship,” Smith said. “Tell them how you feel about such an indirect approach. Ask how they’d feel about if it were done to them. Then discuss a different, better approach for having more disclosure about each one’s phone use.”