

# Sleuth

I read recently the Olympic Committee has from time to time ordered athletes to undergo gender testing. I guess the reason is so male athletes don't parade around as females and win the competition unfairly. I'll bet there are many tough women who couldn't care less about that, and are willing to take on contenders of either sex. But I always liked girls who expected to be treated like girls.

I'm seldom in the company of males or females whose sex is a mystery. But in college on the shores of Lake Ontario in northern New York State, where the snows and winter winds blasted across the campus from October to April, and on February mornings I was tempted to wear everything I owned, we all bundled up in so many layers it was sometimes hard to tell if I was flirting with a girl or her younger brother. Not wanting to mistake a Carl for a Carla, I devised a foolproof method I could use to determine gender in a conversational manner. A guy could ask the following questions while analyzing anyone wearing four or five sweaters and three pairs of pants under a snowmobile suit. Confining his inquiries to people shorter than himself will greatly increase the odds of success.

"What do you think of my new boots?" A boy will ignore the question. A young woman will always be polite.

"How is your mother?" A girl will look guilty, then immediately begin to complain that her family doesn't understand her.

"Do you like the new library?" A young man will often look confused, then embarrassed.

"What's the weather for tomorrow?" A guy will reply with specifics, like wind velocity, dew point or thermal convection quotients. A young lady will likely choose more personal words like comfy or horrid, suffocating or chilly. And then she may mention her mother again.

"Have we met before?" A girl ... even your sister ... will invariably say no.

"How much do you weigh?" A young woman will ignore the question or quickly stamp on your toe.

"That's a pretty outfit you're wearing." A woman will move her hips once, very slightly. A young man will flare his nostrils.

"I like where your outfit bulges out." A young woman will walk away, but if not she'll move her hips two or three times. A guy will laugh or walk away or sock you. Any other reaction should cause alarm.

I haven't found anyone yet who believes this story. When I first told my wife the yarn on our second date, she said I could make anything complicated. Then she stamped on my toe.

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