

It has come to my attention that some of you still aren't getting the concept of the Cliché-Free Zone.™



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You're using your "classified voice" – the voice that you learned from years of reading personal ads – as well as garage sale ads, used car ads and church bulletins. Well, maybe not *that*.

By "classified voice" I mean using words, phrases and abbreviations that you're used to seeing in the personals. The problem, besides indicating that your thinking is trite and hackneyed, is that it sends the message that you've been out on the market so long, that you've absorbed the trade lingo of perpetual personal adders.

It becomes pretty clear in just the first few paragraphs that you've been at this game for a while and are perhaps getting a mite testy about the whole business.

Here's a short list of things that, if you use them, indicate you may already be a cliché:

- Abbreviations such as DWE, ISO, NS-SWM for NSA. In the days of newspaper advertising, you were charged by the word and it made sense to keep word count down. Now you can afford to spell it out.
- "Friends first." Pointless to anyone but you. I know you're trying to weed out the creeps, but the disclaimer has no effect on them and the phrase is really just like a high-pitched scream that sears through a man's eardrums making him claw his head and yell, "Sweet mother of the heavens in a green hat, make it go away!" OK, that may be an exaggeration, but take my word, it's pointless and meaningless.
- "Drama." Way overused...and pointless. Anyone over the age of 14 who hasn't had some drama in his life isn't trying very hard.

- "Look younger than my age." It's official: every woman on the planet now believes this. Alas, men are all trained from an early age to tell you this. Be happy if you just look your age.
- "Your pic gets mine." You've been hanging around the personals too long.
- "Look good in jeans or little black dress." C'mon, you're a person, not a fashion accessory. Unless, of course, you are.

On the distaff side, this just came in: "If one more guy writes that he enjoys 'quiet evenings at home cuddling on the couch with that special someone,' I think I'm going to puke."

Did I mention that this is also a No-Ralping Zone?

The *Male Call* staff recently spent an afternoon expounding to an appreciative group of tennis mates. One lovelorn lass lamented: "OK, Mr. Handyman of Love, I understand now what I'm *not* supposed to say...but that doesn't tell me what I *should* say!"

The answer is as easy to say as it's hard to do.

Let you shine through...but not with abstractions about your alleged personality and "addy" formulas like "I'm an honest person who loves to laugh." Instead, tell a story, give examples.

Don't give lists of requirements about whom, and how your partner must be.

Look at other ads in your category. See what the competition is up to. Say something else.

In short, everything you say should go to distinguishing you from everyone else.

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