

# MARRIAGE TIP JAR



Provided by the Marriage & Family Life Office  
[www.columbuscatholic.org](http://www.columbuscatholic.org)

**DIRECTIONS:** *Cut apart these 52 weekly marriage tips and put them in a decorative jar. Use the label above or create your own. Discuss with your spouse how you will use the jar – perhaps as a conversation starter of a weekly date time relaxing at home or out. Be accountable to each other and witness with joy how your marriage benefits from making small changes over time!*

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Do you have trouble forgiving your spouse? If it is hard to get past an offense, at least forgive the intention behind it. Most likely there was more thoughtlessness than intention involved. Your understanding opens the door to healing the root of the problem. Give the gift of forgiving as you would like to be forgiven by offering empathy for your spouse's weakness.

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Mother Teresa has said, "Peace begins with a smile." The way to a peaceful marriage is paved with smiles! Start with one from the first moment you see your spouse; even if it has been a rough day. A smile says, "We're in this together", creates a space for sharing, and becomes an antidote to any resentment that can poison your Marriage.

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Find a reason to thank your spouse every day, no matter how small. As you do this, also thank God for those qualities in your spouse that spark gratitude. The words, "thank you" will change how you interpret your spouse's actions. As St. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

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Don't have time for a romantic dinner? Surprise your spouse with a fifteen minute date. Whether it's a favorite food, song, or location for your spouse, take a moment for a surprise, a laugh, and a memory. Use the fifteen minutes to express your love and appreciation for your spouse, and keep other topics for another time. These moments are the most memorable.

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Would you believe much of listening is not about your ears? It is eye contact and body language that communicates, "What you say is important." The best listeners also avoid formulating responses while they are listening, and so they end up understanding more deeply than the person quick to speak. Be the listener you would like to speak to.

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Children learn healthy conflict from your example more than from words. How do you and your spouse disagree in front of them? What conversations are best saved for in private? Your children need to see that conflict does not exclude love and respect. Let the presence of your children remind you to fight the problems rather than each-other.

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Theodore Roosevelt said, "Comparison is the thief of joy." It is easy sometimes to compare our marriages with the ones we see in real life or on social media. Instead of comparing spouses or relationships, we can take the opportunity to imitate what we admire. We can also bring the things we admire in others to our prayer, because they indicate points of weakness for us.

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The battle for your priorities takes place on the pages of your calendar. Take a moment with your spouse to look at how your time is actually portioned, and compare it to your priority list. Could an outsider see your calendar and know the priorities you and your spouse have for your family? As a couple, make one small change now toward a more purposeful life.

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As a married person, being healthy is not only a benefit for you—it's also a gift to your spouse. If you are struggling to give up sugar or work out for your health, do it for your spouse. Even better, do it together; you have a natural accountability partner! Your spouse will feel loved because you are willing to make difficult changes to benefit your relationship.

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Mary loves your marriage. How can you as a couple welcome her into your marriage and benefit from her help? Consider making a Marian consecration together, growing in devotion to the rosary, learning more about her, or including an image of her in your home. Mary, who had the world's most perfect marriage is always ready to help you!

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Does your yes mean yes and your no mean no? It is easy to commit in the moment but not follow through. In your marriage, this can erode trust, which is the foundation for effective communication. Ask yourself what the root of this problem could be, then ask your spouse for help in thinking through and keeping your commitments.

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How do you use your Day of Rest? God gave you Sunday to remember what you were made for: relationship with God and each other. Speak with your spouse about a Sunday tradition that you could begin as a couple to take advantage of the gift of Sunday. It could be coffee together, a prayer routine, or a walk...make next Sunday special!

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Emily Post says “manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others.” It is easy to be more aware of our own feelings, especially in reaction to our spouse. Instead of focusing on your spouse’s words, focus on the feelings that lie behind them. You may be surprised at what you find, and your manners toward your spouse may change as a result.

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Praying for your spouse is a powerful act of love. Choose one of your daily activities, like washing dishes, brushing teeth, or driving to work, and use that time to pray for your spouse. Even just an Our Father! Without making extra room in your schedule, you are taking extra time for your marriage and reminding yourself to be your spouse’s spiritual support.

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Do you and your spouse have a special song? Maybe it is the one from your first dance? Surprise your spouse by playing it when your spouse gets home or comes down for coffee. Bonus points if you sing along and serenade your spouse! Besides reliving one of your special moments, this moment is a gift of thoughtfulness to reconnect you in the midst of daily life.

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There is something powerful in acknowledging your spouse publicly. Not that you have to be cheesy, but thanking or praising your spouse in front of others is a way of showing respect and building trust. If you are more inclined to complain or joke about your spouse, remember that this habit can affect how you see and act toward your spouse in private.

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Mother Teresa told her sisters, “Wash the plate not because it is dirty, nor because you are told to wash it, but because you love the person who will use it next.” When you season daily drudgery by offering it in love for your spouse, you inject new love into your Marriage. Your way to Heaven passes through such simple actions, the living of your vocation.

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One way to grow in friendship with your spouse is to pursue a common goal. Maybe this means taking on a hobby to spend intentional time together, but it could also mean discerning a call to serve together. Is there something God is asking you to do or give as a couple? Pay attention to the needs of your community and pray for God’s guidance; He will show you.

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What is your spouse’s most despised chore? Leave a note that you are taking it on this week, and then deliver. It could be something small like putting out the trashcans or making the bed. Or, ask if you can do that despised chore together this week. Even small commitments like these communicate thoughtfulness and gratitude to your spouse.

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Is there a virtue that you are struggling with right now? Maybe patience, or being on time, or gratitude? Ask your home accountability partner—your spouse—to help you form a resolution and help you stick to it. This takes vulnerability and humility, but your spouse will appreciate your openness and effort, as you take responsibility for growing in virtue.

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Laughter is a great marriage builder, releases endorphins, and decreases stress. What things make your spouse laugh? Be sure to take note! Or maybe you have some inside jokes? Make it a mission to give your spouse a stitch in the side tonight. You probably fell in love with your spouse’s laugh at one point when dating; take this opportunity to appreciate it again.

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There are many ways to say I love you. One way you can do this is to put I love you in as many places in your spouse’s way as possible. Maybe it’s a note in a purse, on a bathroom mirror, on a napkin, or in a book or magazine. This works especially well if your spouse’s love language is receiving words or gifts. How does your spouse need to hear “I love you”?

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In St. Catherine of Sienna’s writings we are told that God distributes gifts and virtues to us in such a way that no one has all of them, because He wants us to share our gifts and depend on each other. Take time today to thank your spouse for the strengths that make up for your weaknesses, and the gifts that complement yours. Celebrate these differences as God’s gift!

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Are you committed to many things? Where does your Marriage rank in your commitments? Is there anything in your life that is stealing time and energy from your relationship with your spouse? Many things might be good, but the highest good is your call to holiness, and you have committed yourself to pursuing it through Marriage. How can you reprioritize?

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Phone time consumes more of our attention than we realize, so it is easy to spend more time with a device than with the person we vowed to love 'til death! If this is a struggle for you and your spouse, set a time when technology is put down for the night, or have some rooms where using the phone is off limits. This will create space for love to grow between you.

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Remember when you were dating and you asked each other lots of questions? This helped you grow intimacy through knowledge of each-other. You know your spouse better now, but people change over time and have new experiences. Be sure to still ask questions about your spouse's experience, preferences, and opinions. It shows respect!

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Did you know that at Mass we experience Christ's love for His Bride the Church? It's His wedding feast where He invites us to receive the gift of Himself. Receiving this gift as a couple can restore our love. Spend time preparing for this sacred gift and unpacking it in gratitude together. If your spouse doesn't join you, receive the gift of the Mass for your spouse.

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Remember how Jesus said to remove the wooden beam from your eye before pursuing the splinter in someone else's eye? Any fault you find with your spouse is a great opportunity to search your eye for any forgotten splinters. If you do this first, you will be much more humble and kind when bringing up a problem to your spouse; you will see clearly!

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Talking about finances is not most couples' favorite discussion topic. Here are some ways to make it a productive conversation. Set aside a time (and separately from a date) for the discussion. Focus more on the values behind the numbers than the amount after the dollar sign. Use this conversation to affirm your spouse's dreams, but focus on common goals.

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Timing and wording mean the difference between a disagreement and a fight. Ask your spouse when the best time is to have a frank discussion, as well as how you can bring up hard topics. Think back to previous conflicts to discover what works with your spouse and what doesn't. This is what it takes to learn the art of healthy and productive conflict.

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Do you discuss your spouse with God? The little joys, irritations, struggles, and dreams that make up your marriage are gifts from the hands of the Lord to make you holy and mold your heart to be as merciful as His. Since He gives you grace through the Sacrament of Marriage, be sure to cast your cares upon Him. He loves your marriage more than anyone else.

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Are you frustrated because your spouse doesn't seem to want to communicate? Is your spouse letting you down? Remember Jesus' words, "If you only love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them." Jesus calls us to love as part of a higher call; your marriage is your chance to love heroically.

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Are you experiencing disillusionment with your spouse? Accept your spouse of the present moment; love always is chosen new. God could be disappointed with each one of us, or try to control us, yet instead He still pursues our imperfect hearts with love. This is unconditional love; how can you communicate this commitment to your spouse right now?

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Witness to your children the power of a strong marriage by doing the following four things in front of them: affirm or thank each other, exchange apologies and forgiveness, pray together, and prioritize couple time. If children see you doing these things, they will form a healthy concept of marriage; their preparation for marriage starts now...with you!

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Make your spouse smile today with a reminder of one of the most special days you have experienced together. Whether that memory is a special date or the first time you met, find a way to relive that experience by sending a photo, making the food, or even just letting your spouse know that that time together was one of the best days in your life.

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What part of the house, yard, or car matters most to your spouse? Clean it up or buy something for that spot to demonstrate thoughtfulness to your spouse. Sometimes, doing small services like this for your spouse helps you appreciate the person you married more deeply, as you start thinking about the uniqueness of your spouse.

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At some point today, give your spouse a hug, holding it just a little longer than usual, and thank your spouse for the gift he or she is to you. Name specific ways your spouse has blessed your life! Even if you and your spouse are struggling right now, this simple act strengthens the bond between you, reminding you both of the gift of your marriage.

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Sometimes, the best thing you can do for your marriage is to care for your wellbeing, so that you can give from a place of fullness. How do you need to be physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually renewed to embrace the joys and struggles of your life? Whether it's counselling, a retreat, or a walk with a friend, commit to personal growth for your family.

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Do you and your spouse struggle to find time to be together? Discuss how you can build moments of connection in your busy schedule. For instance, a cup of coffee, a drive around the block, or a FaceTime over lunch...the important thing is the commitment. If you cannot have quantity time, figure out how the moments available to you can become quality time.

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Holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries are easy to pass by, but they can be important to the health of your marriage. In any activity or relationship, we need both daily practice and periods of more in-depth investment. Make the most of the next occasion by planning a special surprise for your spouse, or even just a time for the two of you to invest in your marriage.

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What is at the center of your family life? If it's not God, it's a false god. As spouses, you have the responsibility of orienting your family toward Heaven, which is a matter of small daily decisions. What aspect of your family life needs to decrease so God's presence can increase in your home? Commit to displacing this idol, and make a course correction today.

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Have you and your spouse developed any skills or hobbies together recently? Get out of the movie groove and discover something new about your spouse by beginning a new activity together, whether it's German cooking or photography or biking. Whatever you do, the learning process together will make for laughter and some meaningful memories.

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Have you expressed appreciation to your spouse recently? Take a minute to reflect on what your spouse does for you. What burdens do you not carry because of your spouse? In what ways have you felt forgiven, supported, and encouraged? Let your spouse know that you see what he or she is doing for you, and that you are grateful for that gift.

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Do you have good "couple friends"? At least one couple who can support and inspire you in your marriage? Remember, we tend to be like our friends, so be sure there are marriages around that you want to imitate. These friends are also the ones most likely to support and encourage you in your marriage, which can only happen if they know you well.

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Do you and your spouse have different ideas about what the word "relax" means? Maybe it's TV for you and running for your spouse? Give to each other more deeply this week by choosing to enjoy an evening your spouse's way. Or maybe decide to take turns planning the evening. Use this as an opportunity to communicate to your spouse by your presence.

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Eating together can be one of the most beautiful parts of the day, but it is easy to rush it or to spend the mealtime talking shop. Make a sit-down meal this week extra special by enjoying each-other's company, with the rule that nobody brings up any practical concerns or planning. Maybe make it extra special by using the china or a new recipe.

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How often do you dwell on your spouse's past failings? When we focus our energies on past offenses, it can lead to resentment which ends up imprisoning us. Let new life into these places in your mind by embracing and complimenting your spouse's good qualities in the present. As St. Paul says, love does not brood over injury, but rejoices in the truth.

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A Native American proverb says, "Never criticize a man unless you have walked a mile in his moccasins." Do you take the time to put yourself in your spouse's place to understand the burdens and concerns of his or her life? This practice can cause your love to be more thoughtful and empathetic, and allow you to give difficult feedback lovingly.

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Do you have a decision that weighs heavily on you and your spouse right now? Pray about it both separately and together, opening your heart to God's will. As Proverbs says, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." Not only will this practice strengthen your relationship with God, you will be more open and flexible with each other.

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Have you ever thought about offering the witness of your marriage as a gift to others? Maybe your parish needs help with marriage preparation or enrichment, or maybe you feel called to take a younger couple under your wing. The witness of joy-filled couples can inspire others with hope and a deeper understanding of the vocation of Marriage.

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Matthew Kelly says, "Once we stop dreaming, we start to lead lives of quiet desperation, and little by little the passion and energy begin to disappear from our lives." Ask each other about your dreams, and ask detailed questions. Encouraging each other to live with passion, energy, and focus will bring joy to your marriage as you transform your dreams into growth.

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Being lazy or proactive about life at home are habits that we build up from dealing with the "little things". Rather than walking by a mess or saying, "It's my spouse's job", train yourself to see the little things as acts of love for your spouse—they'll notice. But even more, this practice will change you to root out selfishness from your life.

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