

The real reason why girls play hard to get

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The most successful feminine wiles included appearing highly self-confident, talking to other people and withholding sex. Picture: Thinkstock

For generations, suitors have suspected that playing hard to get is a feminine wile dreamt up solely to try their patience.

It seems, however, that there are sound evolutionary reasons why treating a man mean is the best way to keep him keen.

According to psychologists who examined a host of much-used strategies, women blow hot and cold with a possible partner to test his commitment and quality.

Researchers analysed 58 infuriating strategies used by women playing hard to get.

They ranged from flirting with others and being "snooty" to letting a suitor's call divert to voicemail.

The study, reported in the *European Journal of Personality*, asked more than 1,500 men and women which tactics worked best.

The most successful feminine wiles included appearing highly self-confident, talking to other people, withholding sex, sarcasm, sounding busy, teasing, flirting with others and turning down the first few dates.

Overall, women were more likely than men to play hard to get, the researchers from the University of Western Sydney and Singapore Management University discovered.

The researchers suggested that was because women are trying to ensure a potential mate will stand by them once they have a child.