

Don't be the drunk dater

Getting tipsy is one thing, but drinking to excess can be a relationship disaster

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On "The Bachelor," the game ended early for Blakeney (r.) when she overdid it on Champagne.

You never want to be that girl on a first date. You know, the one who drinks a glass of wine waiting for her date to arrive, plows through two or three martinis with dinner and then starts slurring her life story by the time the main course arrives.

The proof: This week's debut episode of "The Bachelor: Officer and a Gentleman," where Southern belle Blakeney proved just what a turnoff a sloppy date can be. She not only fell off her barstool, but the liquor inspired her to create - and perform - a rap about the bach in front of 30 other horrified (and bemused) women. Blakeney did not get a rose.

On "The Bachelor" it's understandable that a gal would get a little tipsy. They're competing with a bushel of girls in low-dipping dresses, trying desperately to get noticed. Getting plied with free Champagne by the producers doesn't help. And you think any of them ate anything before they squeezed into those frisky frocks?

But in reality (not the television kind), when you are one on one with a date, it's all right to let your

nerves show a little.

"It's okay to be nervous on a first date. Embrace that nervousness because you'll never get that opportunity again," says relationship expert Cooper Lawrence. "You should love the process. Embrace your inner dork. It is one thing to be nervous. That's fine. It is a totally different thing to be sloppy."

On one first date, Manhattan writer Jill, 26, got so drunk, she wandered up a stairway thinking it was the exit. The guy found her and put her directly into a cab.

"I mean directly into a cab," she remembers. "No good night kiss or anything. That didn't work out."

Drinking because you are nervous is actually counterintuitive on the first date. The irony is that you don't act like yourself at all, when the whole point is that you are trying to get a new person to see the real you.

"They are only getting to know drunk you. While you may seem like a good time, you will definitely end up saying or doing things you regret in the morning," Lawrence says.

So do you completely abstain on a date?

Take the cues from your partner.

If he orders a beer, order one drink, and sip it slowly. Every action you take on a first date is being interpreted because he doesn't know anything about you.

"Drinking a lot suggests she is insecure about her personality and feels she needs to compensate by getting drunk to become more relaxed or interesting," says 28-year-old lawyer Jon, who has experienced his fair share of drunk dinner partners.

No set number of dates will tell you when it is okay to toss some back with your new love interest (and on "The Bachelor," who knows how many more dates you'll even get?), but experts advise waiting until you feel so comfortable with the person that you don't mind if he sees you doing something silly.

"Sometimes, sharing a whole bottle or two of wine with a new guy is great," says Lawrence. "Just make sure you feel comfortable if you start acting like an idiot."