

The handkerchief has been a resourceful semaphore for flirtation for well over a century. In the Victorian era, women were literally confined to “straight laced” behavior, bound not only by corsets with whalebone stays, but by restrictive social conventions, which forbade a single woman to be left alone with a man. Yet resourceful damsels employed whatever devices they had at hand – in this instance, the handkerchief – to send steamy signals to a suitor. Below, a brief table on The Language of Flirting:

Drawing Across the Lips – Desirous of an Acquaintance

Drawing Across the Eyes – I Am Sorry

Drawing Across the Cheek – I Love You

Drawing Through the Hand – I Hate You

Twirling in Both Hands – Indifference

Holding by the Center – You Are Too Willing

Resting on the Right Cheek – Yes

Resting on the Left Cheek – No

Twisting in Right Hand – I Love Another

Twisting in Left Hand – I Wish to be Rid of You

Folding It – I Wish to Speak With You

Over the Shoulder – Follow Me

Opposite Corners in Both Hands – Wait For Me

Drawing Across the Forehead – We Are Watched

Placing on the Right Eye – You Have Changed

Letting it Remain on the Eyes – You Are Cruel

Winding Around the Forefinger – I Am Engaged

Winding Around the Third Finger – I Am Married

Dropping – We Shall be Friends

Putting in the Pocket – No More at Present