

## So you STILL want to marry a Filipina

In my humble opinion, you've made a great decision, assuming you scored well on the test. Be sure you go about it the right way, though.

1. Be sure you're ready for marriage, and a multicultural one at that. Questions to ask yourself:

a. Will I be embarrassed to admit I'm seeking a foreign wife to my family or friends? If so, don't pursue this. You're not ready. In your own mind there is a stigma that will cause you and your future wife much suffering. She doesn't deserve that. You will be unhappy.

b. Am I financially prepared? You're going to have to travel to the Philippines, stay there, eat there. You're going to have to pay for innumerable immigration forms and services. You're going to have to pay for the marriage and possibly reception. You're going to have to fly your wife over here, buy her new clothes, get her medical and dental treatment (she will need it), and set up a home. And even then, she will expect you to be a responsible husband (i.e., you need to have a job, or at least be pursuing one!). She'll usually help by getting a job herself, but Filipinas do not want deadbeat husbands any more than any other woman does. You may also be required to help out your in-laws financially from time to time.

c. Am I in a hurry? Slow down. Marriage to a foreign national doesn't happen over night. The journey that begins with your first letter and ends with her stepping off the plane in the US (or your home country) will cover at least many months, and possibly even a couple of years. It's not easy, fellas, not easy at all.

2. Okay, you're still game. Learn about the Philippines. Read. There are many free online news services and cultural sites dealing with the Philippines. Know at least something about the country your future wife is coming from. Filipinos are very proud people, and rightfully so. Don't be disrespectful. Also, books are available, as discussed elsewhere in this Section.

3. The BEST way to meet a Filipina is through another Filipina (normally native-born; 2nd generation will likely not be as receptive to your query). Do you know any? If so, odds are they know someone in the Philippines who is open to foreign relationships. Benefits to this method are:

a. It's free

b. The Filipina who gives you your reference can vouch for your character, income, etc. That will go a long way in alleviating any fears your girl or her family might have about you. There are, after all, some real cretins here and in other countries who simply are not suitable husband material due to their abusive nature, addictions, or bad work ethic.

c. The Filipina who gives you your reference can vouch for your girl's character, also! This decreases the chance you'll end up with a "gold-digger" that simply wants to leave the Philippines. You'll also learn something about the girl's history and family.

d. Your Filipina contact and her husband can help you with immigration matters, travel, customs, etc., when the time comes.

4. If you don't know any Filipinas, your next best bet is obviously a correspondence service. Some criteria in choosing one:

- a. The service should specialize in Filipinas. At a minimum, it should not include women from more than two or three countries, since such services tend to be too broad in scope to provide you with the kind of service you're going to need.
  - b. It's always better if a Filipina or Filipino helps run the service, for obvious reasons.
  - c. Don't use services that advertise girls as sexual objects. For one thing, this is just morally objectionable. For another, many Filipinas are able to access the Internet these days, and you wonder why they would agree to have themselves portrayed like that when there are so many other more legitimate and respectable services around. Think about it.
  - d. Many services offer free names, usually of relatives or friends. Take advantage of these when you can, for the same reasons as stated in paragraph 3.c.
  - e. Look for testimonials. E-mail those people and see how they're doing. An absence of testimonials is a warning sign. People involved in happy, understanding relationships normally do not desire to be "anonymous."
  - f. Be a bit cautious with any service that is operating within the Philippines. Matching Filipino women for marriage to foreign nationals on a mail-order basis and other similar practice is technically illegal in the Philippines. (Republic Act No. 6955). Even so, there are obviously several such businesses operating there, and I've never heard of anyone getting into trouble for doing so, but if you do work with a Philippines-based service, do yourself and the service's owner a favor and don't go bragging about it to the wrong people.
5. Once you have selected a respectable service, write. Not just one girl, but several, since there's a fair possibility she's writing several guys. Don't, please DON'T get too attached to a girl at this point. If you're saying "I love you" in your fourth letter, you're in trouble. Same applies to her, any girl that says she loves you before she even meets you...well, you figure it out. Most services offer writing tips, and you should follow them. A few highlights:
- a. Don't be forward, discuss sex or virginity or anything like that.
  - b. Do purchase for her some Philippine stamps and mail them to her. This might sound odd at first, but there's a very high probability that stamps aren't in her budget. And without stamps, she can't mail letters. To you, Romeo. But if you send money for stamps...well, sometimes that money gets re-routed to the food budget. Many penpal services sell stamps, as I do at my ASAWA website.
  - c. Don't send her money before you've exchanged at least a dozen letters or more. My guesstimate is that 95% of these girls are honest and good natured, but the other 5% have a dozen or more pen pals just as "special" as you, and they make a damn good living at asking for money from all of you. Later, when you truly know the girl, you can make a more informed judgment.
  - d. Write often. Some girls even have access to E-mail. If they do, use this, and keep copies of all letters, whether snail mail or electronic. You will need these later to establish the bona fides of your relationship when it comes time for the dreaded embassy or consulate INTERVIEW.
  - e. Get a dictionary of the girl's native language so that you can decipher those cryptic words and phrases she's going to hurl at you.

6. Okay, you've established a REAL relationship, and you're ready to take the plunge.
  - a. Either visit the ASAWA forum's Immigration community or join the listserv Mag-Anak. This is imperative. Not tapping the minds of a hundred men and women who have successfully accomplished the mission you are embarking upon is lunacy. Both are free, non-commercial, supportive, and friendly. This is immigration First Aid, and believe me, you're going to be bleeding plenty once the American Embassy, Consulate, or INS get hold of you.
  - b. Don't panic, you'll be successful if you're patient and persevere and get support from those who offer it.
  - c. Go and meet the girl in the Philippines. See if a true chemistry exists. If so, ball's in your court. Propose or don't.
7. Get your prospective wife a fiancée visa if possible. For some utterly incomprehensible reason, you can get a Filipina fiancée over here in a few months, whereas getting your wife over takes twice as long! This might not be possible if your wife and her family want a domestic wedding, of course.
8. Get a decent long-distance telephone plan or some discounted prepaid calling cards, or you'll go broke quickly.
9. Then you're on your way. Hope this is of help to some of you. Good luck!

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What is the #1 financial mistake of men who are new to Fil-West relationships? *They call the Philippines using their regular long distance carrier!*

Don't do it! Please visit [SpeedyPin](#), one of ASAWA's primary sponsors. As most Fil-West couples already know, using a phone card can save you a *lot* of money!

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