

## Birth Order and Marriage Partners

Birth order is one factor, an important factor, in determining the nature of a marriage. It can help determine whether the relationship will be difficult or harmonious, whether the couple can work together, whether they can communicate with each other and to what extent and how they will make decisions.

There are twenty-five types of marriage according to birth order. Following is a thumbnail sketch of each of these marriages.

**Only/Only** - Two only children usually get along with each other but often live in separate worlds together. At home each may do his/her own activities while leaving the other alone. They do not pressure each other. In communicating they tend to put their own content into each others' words, and to expect each other to understand what they say without having to spell it out. This may lead to frustration but not usually conflict. If they come from harmonious homes they can have a very good relationship.

**Only/First** - If you are an only child male, you can make this a good relationship by understanding that the first born is often vague about what she feels, wants or needs. By paying close attention to her nonverbal communication, you can orient yourself to her. Unless you pay attention to nonverbal cues, this could be a difficult relationship for you. You will be trying to satisfy her as you imagine she wants rather than knowing her. . If you are a female only, your relationship with a first born is likely to be compatible. He will tend to rely on you for direction.

**Only/Second** - This is the most common marital relationship with a fairly high rate of success. As an only you find the second born's punctuality, reliability, loyalty and perfectionism satisfying. You may have to get used to constructive criticism which a second born may give. Instead of getting compliments, you'll get suggestions for improvement. Also, since second borns typically do not express emotion freely you may feel disconnected.

**Only/Third** - You may be able to connect with the third born emotionally because they tend to be empathetic, sympathetic and caring. This relationship may be uncomfortable for you if your partner is given to unpredictable behavior, as many third borns are. They may also be insistent on correcting personal faults of yours such as smoking, working late or not being sympathetic enough with the children. You may provoke jealousy in the third born when you relate to others of the opposite sex.

**Only/Fourth** - This relationship is great in the friendship/courtship stage. The fourth born is attentive, supportive, caring and understanding. Fourth borns can be exceedingly charming. After marriage the relationship can continue to be good unless the fourth born harbors anger from the past. In that case, you could be entering an abusive relationship.

**First/Only** - This is a compatible relationship if you are male. You will probably enjoy your partner's expressions of feeling, her clarity about what she wants and her allowing you to do what you want. On the other hand, if you are female you could find the only to be exasperating. You would probably not get heard, or be misinterpreted by him. He would do things she thought would please you, but which do not fit what you want. In this case, professional counseling may help you to have a good relationship. However, this relationship does not usually have overt conflict but rather inner pain in both.

**First/First** - This is a relationship which seems to rarely happen. First borns tend to walk away from each other due to inability to connect. If they were to be married to each other, they would tend to seek good feelings from other people rather than each other. However, this relationship would not have abuse or conflict, but rather a feeling of boredom, of obligation toward each other, and of being out of touch with each other.

**First/Second** - This relationship seems to be rare because first borns tend to find second borns to be scary. In relationship, the first born tends to be at the mercy of the second born psychologically. You may feel the need to be cautious around the second born for fear of offending him/her, which would keep you from relating in depth. However, because of the scariness of the second born, he/she may appear attractive to you. If you are female, you are more likely than a male first born to be compatible with a second born.

**First/Third** - This relationship can be good if you can enjoy being challenged emotionally. You would probably discover the third born having the upper hand psychologically.

If the third born harbors anger from the past you could find yourself at the brunt of it. If you exert emotional force in the relationship you will probably find your partner getting depressed.

**First/Fourth** - The quality of this relationship depends on whether your fourth born partner carries anger. Your partner has the upper hand in this relationship, being able to manipulate you. You may be at a loss in communicating with this person, never knowing what the reaction will be. You may be tempted to use emotional force in the relationship but the result could be retaliation in an unexpected form. However, this relationship does not tend to be abusive.

**Second/Only** - This is the most common marital relationship. It starts with a mutual attraction, with the second born being attracted to the only's free expression of emotion (which may become irritating in marriage), talkativeness (only's like to give all the details) and the only's desire to organize. This relationship is usually compatible. Unless there are other issues which cause problems, these relationships tend to endure.

**Second/First** - This can be a good relationship if both come from happy backgrounds. However, you would probably not find the average first born to be interesting enough. It would appear to you that the first born is unable to respond to you, especially to your humor. It might be difficult to connect with this person. However, know that in about one-third of families the oldest child is an only child psychologically. You would be drawn to this person.

**Second/Second** - This is a compatible relationship in which the perfectionistic tendencies of both partners are reinforced by the other. The relationship would have a lasting quality to it. This relationship usually would not challenge you emotionally. In fact, this relationship tends to minimize emotions. Perhaps that's a plus!

**Second/Third** - This relationship can be good if you enjoy the spontaneity of the third born. Even though you are perfectionistic, if you do not require this of your partner you will probably get along well. You will find that the third born has the upper hand psychologically, so you want to be sure he/she is not carrying anger from childhood or previous relationships. You could find the third born challenging your sense of discipline, your emphasis on the rational rather than emotional and your attention to detail.

**Second/Fourth** - This relationship can be good if the fourth born is free of anger. You would share on the rational level, and the fourth born could make life enjoyable for you. However, if the fourth born carries anger, this could be a miserable relationship for you. Your partner would have the upper hand over you psychologically, leaving you feeling helpless. Even when difficult, this relationship does not usually become abusive.

**Third/Only** - This is a fairly common marital relationship. You would find it easy to please this person, and you would like the emotional expression in response to what you do. However, your spontaneity may wear on your partner who may want life to be predictable, orderly and consistent. In conflict, you may be unable to get through to this person the way you wish- you may think you understand your partner, but on a gut level you do not.

**Third/First** - You may be attracted to the first born who seems to have long range dreams. You may wish to help achieve those dreams, only to find the first born does not pursue them with the vigor that you would like. Your suggestions, ideas and plans do not turn the first born on after awhile. However, the first born usually reacts passively rather than aggressively, and you might like a more active response. This relationship does not usually have much overt conflict.

**Third/Second** - The quality of this relationship depends on the quality of the upbringing of both. Your humor, easy going ways, and acceptance of less than perfection tends to stress out the second born. Your tendency to communicate the bottom line rather than give details is unsatisfying to a second born partner. Also, you have the upper hand psychologically in this relationship. If there is marital discord, the second born tends to have the worst of it.

**Third/Third** - This appears to be the most compatible of relationships. Two third borns work to please each other, understand each other and overlook each others' idiosyncrasies. If there are difficulties, they are usually caused by one or the other bringing children into the relationship. In defending his or her children a third born may attack the other emotionally. Third born couples who have children together tend to overprotect their children.

**Third/Fourth** - This can be a good relationship in which the fourth born is stimulating to you. In this relationship, you may experience the fourth born as having the upper hand psychologically. You may find yourself working hard to please this person, and being surprised by the unpredictable responses you get. The fourth born can be an exciting person to you. However, a fourth born carrying anger would be very difficult in a relationship.

**Fourth/Only** - This can be a good relationship if you realize that you do not understand onlies. This can be a relationship of discovery as you learn how the only child mind works. However, if you enter into the relationship thinking that you understand the only as well as you understand other birth orders, you may find yourself getting angry at this person who seems so unreasonable to you.

**Fourth/First** - This can be a good relationship if you are willing to take leadership. The first born is out of touch with his/her own feelings, thoughts, and wants. If you accept this, then you can help provide direction for the relationship. If you are offended, thinking the first born is being evasive, you will have a difficult time in the relationship.

**Fourth/Second** - In this relationship, you have the upper hand psychologically. This can be a good relationship if you recognize the second born need for harmony, antipathy to anger and

need for structure based on defined rules. The drawback for you may be that the second born does not understand how your mind works.

**Fourth/Third** - This can be a good relationship if you recognize the third born need to feel safe. You need to contribute to the feeling of security by being open, honest and trustworthy. Manipulating the third born can be threatening to him/her. If you are open, a third born will usually be caring, empathetic and supportive.

**Fourth/Fourth** - This is a compatible relationship, involving two people who resonate with each other. If both are open with each other, they can relate well. There is a need to continue relating when things get difficult in order to overcome the fourth born tendency to withdraw rather than engage when there is trouble.