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Ask Julia

10/08/2002 12:01 AM

What's up with the letters this week? No chaos. No lives falling apart. No broken hearts. Am I to take this to mean all is well in the naked city? All of you are content with your love lives, satisfied with your careers, at peace with your relatives? Of course not! So dig up those old resentments and start writing. Auntie Jules is here for you.

Send your questions to askjulia@stltoday.com. And if you have comments on anything Ask Julia, then please post them in the [STLexclusives Forum](#).

Dear Julia :

I'm a 14-year-old advice columnist for my junior high school newspaper. I named my column Miss Know-It-All and I hoped to pick your brain for a few suggestions. So far I've only written one column but the school year just started. I've always been interested in the advice columns in our local newspaper and I'd like to think of myself as a pretty good writer and have even won the writer of the year award. I'd like Miss Know-It-All to be as funny and witty as yours. (Is it even possible?) So what I really want to ask you is if you can give any advice to a young, innocent writer. Pretty please? Rock on in Belleville!

Signed,
Miss Know-It-All

Dear Miss Know-It-All:

Gee, with a name like that, how can you go wrong? You know, I just bet parents all over Belleville are praying right now that their child didn't write this letter. No one *wants* to be an advice columnist, my dear. It's just what happens to you when you can't get work writing anything else! Seriously, though ... no, it isn't possible to be as funny and witty as me so you should probably just give up the game right now. No, *really* seriously, though ... I encourage your passion for writing and applaud your accomplishments so far, even if your ambitions are highly questionable. My advice? Love the language, baby. I can't tell you how many people I meet who want to be writers but aren't particularly interested in, you know, learning the craft. Spelling counts. Grammar counts. It all matters. Read everything you can get your hands on and learn from it all. It doesn't matter what you write if you don't know how to write.

When it comes to giving advice, I'd normally suggest you draw on your experiences, but since you're only 14, those are probably pretty limited. Instead, draw on what you see on TV. Oh,

there I go kidding again. Just remember that all you're doing is offering an opinion. Put yourself in your reader's shoes, consider all sides to an argument and never sacrifice compassion for humor. Unless it's something really, really funny, of course. Good luck!

Dear Julia:

For our anniversary, I want to surprise my girlfriend with a hotel room in St. Louis with the most romantic view of the city that I can afford. The Adam's Mark has 18 stories, but that doesn't mean the view is the best, and I wouldn't know whether to request windows facing east or west. I haven't stayed in any St. Louis luxury hotels and am not as fluent with the cityscape as I'd like to be. Can you offer any advice?

**Signed,
Hopeless Romantic**

Dear Hopeless:

It's our anniversary? I had no idea. Oh. Wait. Never mind. Listen, you can have my sofa bed for \$30 a night. Excellent view of Maplewood and free cable, although I can't find the remote. Continental breakfast (read: bowl of stale Kashi) included. You want a room with a view, eh? It's a lovely notion, but you're right that the tallest hotels don't guarantee the best views. I haven't actually spent as much time in St. Louis hotel rooms as one might guess, but I think you're barking up the right tree with the Adam's Mark. I hear the rooms facing east give you a groovy vista of that big, metal arch, and if that's the kind of thing that makes your gal's toes curl, then go for it. Personally, I'd give up a stellar view for a night in a romantic B&B anytime. You can always take her to Harry's for dinner to get an outstanding glimpse of the city lights and then focus on the view from inside your hotel room later. (Or you could save bundles by simply renting "A Room with a View," which happens to be the all-time most romantic movie ever-and-ever-for-infinity, in the humble opinion of certain advice columnists I know.)

Got comments? Post them in the [STLexclusives Forum](#) or we'll post 'em for you! But, as always, send your questions to askjulia@stltoday.com.
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