

Heat Levels in Romance

Heat Levels Defined: This refers to how intense romantic scenes are in a story and how intense the sexual tension is between the characters.

Most Common Heat Levels

*Taken from a number of online publishers

SWEET: (Diamond, Firebolt Level 1)

- Most of the heat is behind closed doors, romance deals with the emotional aspects rather than the physical. Exclusive relationships between two characters committed to each other. Non-erotic, with non-consummated love scenes or consummated with no graphic details. Heartwarming romances with strong family elements, about the pursuit of love, marriage and family in America today (Harlequin American).

MODERATE: (Emerald, Sterling, Tangy, Firebolt Level 2, Mild)

- Moderate sensuality with relatively mild love scenes that are more sensual than graphic. Some adult language with clinical terms for genitalia being acceptable, but no graphic euphemisms. Sweeter erotic romance with longer sensual tension and slower developed heat. Relationships between two committed individuals.

SENSUAL: (Sapphire, Liquid, Firebolt Level 3, Highly Sensual)

- Standard in most mainstream romances. Love scenes can be hotter and occur more frequently. Explicit adult language, sensual, more explicit love scenes. (Harlequin Blaze) Red-hot, sensuous, highly romantic, anywhere from fun and flirtatious to dark and sensual, with fully described love scenes and a high level of fantasy. (Silhouette Desire) Sensual love stories, sensual love scenes, romantic conflict and quest for HEA (happily-ever-after).

VERY SENSUAL: (Liquid, Firebolt Level 4)

- Push the boundaries with increased sensual tension, frequent sexual encounters, descriptive and explicit sex. Sexual tension/encounters resulting in committed relationship between hero/heroine, although wedding bells not needed. Might be offensive to some.

SPICY: (Garnet, Firebolt Level 5, Carnal, Erotic)

- Really push the boundaries with hot and spicy erotic romances with detailed love scenes. Graphic description of body parts and intercourse is encouraged. There may be light bondage and maybe more than two individuals within the sex scenes.

INTENSE: (Molten, Sizzling, Extreme, Erotica)

- Intense heat and high sexual interaction, descriptive and explicit sex. Can include BDSM, fetish, kink, multiple partners, swapping partners, bisexuality, M/F, HFN or HEA, GLBT. Not entirely dependent on romance.

EXOTIC: (Exotika)

- Quality erotica for women that focus on a woman's sexual journey or adventures. May contain a romance, but it doesn't have to be the primary focus. The relationship does not need to be monogamous or end with commitment.

BEYOND SIZZLING: (Excess 1-4)

- Bondage might be a bit intense, as are the sex scenes. This is extreme, but still within bounds of consensual sex.

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