



A to Z Relationship & Dating Guide

A TO Z RELATIONSHIP & DATING GUIDE

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Part 1

Healthy Dating & Relationship Tips

Introduction To Dating & Relationships



In this guide, the Dating and Relationships content discussed focuses on traditional male/female relationships. For supplemental material and resources with regards to significant others in same-gender relationships, simply key in words or phrases pertaining to the information you seek into your favorite search engine directory.

This guide presents an overall look at the basics of relationships and dating, both in the real world and online. Since the latest reports show that nearly everyone can learn the most important social skills needed for relationship building, this guide focuses on the ABC's of Healthy Relationships. And so that you can be alerted to possible problem areas, the ABC's of unhealthy relationships is also covered.

For help, support, a shoulder to cry on, for fun and to meet new people and interact with others, sections follow that offer support groups, organizations, programs, tips, self-help and other resources.

Since Dating and Relationships are such a large, important part of everyday life, this ebook strives to help clear up myths from facts and present an overview of surrounding issues. It includes information along with a variety of helpful tips and resources available based upon the most recent studies, research, reports, articles, findings, products and services available, so that you can learn more about Dating and Relationships.

Note that the contents here are not presented from a medical practitioner, and that any and all health care planning should be made under the guidance of your own medical and health practitioners. The content within only presents an overview of Dating and Relationships research for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice from a professional physician.

Back to Basics

Let's take a peak at some of the more common concepts above "love" relationships and see if they are myths or based upon reality.

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“All we need is love.” Myth or not? Since love does seem to be able to overcome anything and everything, at least on television and at the movies, this seems like a reality. However, truth is, making relationships work takes skill and hard work, regardless of the “love” factor. This is a myth here.

Just like in fairy tales, once true love is found, people live happily ever after. Truth or myth? Granted couples can look into each other’s eyes and have those warm fuzzy feelings. However, truth is, all couples will have their ups and downs. “Happily ever after” seems to imply a perfect, problem-less relationship when in reality, those don’t exist.

It has to be “love at first sight” in order to work long-term. Myth or truth? While this can be true for some, it certainly doesn’t have to be for all couples in long-term relationships. Many people grow together over time.

Since practically anyone can learn the nuts and bolts of relationship building, focusing on some basic techniques that can be learned is a must. The main ones, in no particular order, are:

- **Read:** “Read” people well.
- **Rapport:** Develop rapport with others well.
- **Finesse:** Have some finesse; i.e. handle conversations and activities in a cordial manner
- **Conflict Resolution:** Resolve negative issues and conflicts without too much friction
- **Support Co-Op:** Gain the support and cooperation in working towards a common goal

Let’s take a little closer look at each and what learning is involved.

Reading People: Body Language Briefing



Body language is the meaning behind the words or the “unspoken” language. Surprisingly, studies show that only up to an estimated 10 percent of our communication is verbal. The majority of the rest of communication is unspoken. This unspoken language isn’t rocket science. However, there are some generalizations or basic interpretations that can be applied to help with the understanding or translating of these unspoken meanings. Here are some basics below.

Smile – People like warm smiles. Think of a

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heartfelt warm-fussy, maybe your favorite pet, and smile.

Eyes - If you don't look someone in the eyes while speaking, this can be interpreted as dishonesty or hiding something. Likewise, shifting eye movement or rapid changing of focus/direction can translate similarly. If more than one person is present in a group, look each person in the eye as you speak, slowly turning to face the next person and acknowledge him or her with eye contact as well. Continue on so that each person has felt your warm, trusting glance. Some suggest beginning with one person and moving clockwise around the group so that no one is missed, and so that you are not darting around, seemingly glaring at people.

Attention Span / Attitude – Other people can tell what type attitude you have by your attention span. If you quickly lose focus of the other person and what is being said, and if your attention span wanders, this shows through and makes you seem disinterested, bored, possibly even uncaring.

Attention Direction – If you sit or stand so that you are blocking another in the party, say someone is behind you, this can be interpreted as rude or thoughtless. So be sure to turn so that everyone is included in the conversation or angle of view, or turn gently, at ease and slowly, while talking, so that everyone is incorporated, recognized and involved in the conversation. Again some suggest the clockwise movement when working a group.

Arms Folded / Legs Crossed– This can be seen as defensive or an end to the conversation. So have arms hang freely or hold a glass of water, a business card or note taking instruments while communicating with others. Be open with open arms. Note: If you need to cross legs, cross at your ankles and not your knees. Sitting tightly folded up says that you are closed to communications.

Head Shaking – This is fairly accurate. If people are shaking their heads while you speak, they are in agreement. If they are shaking, “no,” disagreement reigns in their minds.

Space / Distance – On the whole, people like their own personal body space. Give people room and keep out of their space. Entering too close can be intrusive and viewed as aggressive.

Leaning – Sitting or standing, leaning is viewed as interest. In other words, an interested listener leans toward the speaker.

Note others' body language – While you are with others, note how their bodies read. If a person suddenly folds his arms across his chest and begins shaking his head “no,” you've probably lost him. Might try taking a step back and picking up where the conversation began this turn for the negative and regroup. It's all about strategic planning!

Developing Rapport

Now let's take a quick peak at the basics of developing rapport with others. In a nutshell, what it takes is to ask questions, have a positive, open attitude, and encourage an open exchange of communications (both verbal and unspoken), listen to verbal and unspoken communications and share positive feedback. Here are a few details on each step.

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Ask Questions – Building rapport is similar to interviewing someone for a job opening or it can be like a reporter seeking information for an article. Relax and get to know the other person with a goal of finding common ground or things of interest. You can begin by simply commenting on the other person's choice of attire, if in person, or about their computer, if online, and following up with related questions. For example, in person, you could compliment the other person on their color choice and or maybe a pin, ring or other piece of jewelry and ask where it came from. In online communications, you could compliment the other person's font, smile faces or whatever they use, mention that the communication style seems relaxed and ask if he or she writes a lot. Then basically follow up, steering clear of topics that could entice or cause arguing, while gradually leading the person to common ground you'd like to discuss.

Attitude – have a positive attitude and leave social labels at home (or in a drawer, if you're at home). Many people can tell instantly if you have a negative attitude or if you feel superior. So treat other people as you would like to be treated. And give each person a chance.

Open Exchange – Do encourage others to share with you. Some people are shy, scared or inexperienced in communicating and welcome an opportunity to share. So both with body language and verbal communication invite an exchange. Face the other person with your arms open, eyes looking into theirs gently (not glaring or staring), and encourage a conversation with a warm smile.

Listen – Be an active listener. Don't focus your thoughts on what YOU will say next. Listen to what the other person is saying and take your clues from there, while also noting the body language. For example, if the other person folds his arms and sounds upset, you may need to change the subject or let him have some space and distance; maybe even try approaching him later on and excusing yourself to go make a phone call (of head to the buffet table or somewhere to escape). On the other hand, if the other person is leaning towards you, following your every word and communicating with you as if you were old friends, BINGO. You've built rapport!

Share – People like compliments. So hand them out freely without over doing it. Leaving a nice part of yourself like a compliment is a good memory for the other person to recall - numerous times. That's good rapport. But do be sincere! False compliments aren't easily disguised.

Fundamentals Of Finesse

Basically using finesse in handling relationships means using subtle skill, tact or diplomacy when handling a situation. This doesn't mean you need to use fancy, flowery phrases or lengthy 10-letter words or anything. It means focusing on the positive in a friendly way, and not embarrassing the other person.

For instance, finesse means not telling a host that he or she has body odor or that his or her house looks and smells like a trash dump. Instead, it means politely excusing yourself upon entering, and informing the host of an unplanned meeting that came up or family member who dropped by unexpectedly, and that you wanted to drop by for a quick "Hello" to thank the host for the invitation before rushing off to your appointment. Keep things simple here, smile and think, "James Bond" with that English gentleman concept.

Conflict Resolution



How do you handle conflicts? If you can put your ego aside pretty much and try to keep friction to a minimum, your relationships should move along fairly smoothly. Where you feel disagreement, if you can “agree” to disagree on certain things with the other party involved that will help, too. In short, conflict resolution means to pretty much deal with others as you would want them to deal with you.

For example, let’s look at fictitious John and Mary, out on their first date at a restaurant. A drunken man passes by their table and accidentally spills Mary’s glass of water. John gets upset and says something along the lines of, “That makes me mad! I hate drunks. They should all be put in jail.”

Mary, on the other hand, who has an alcoholic father (unknown as this point to John), may feel embarrassed and saddened by John’s revelation and get quiet, giving only brief “yes” or “no” answers from that point on.

Hopefully, John picks up on this. He can use finesse and conflict resolution and say, “Mary, I’m sorry for my outburst and really didn’t mean that. Actually, a drunk driver caused an accident that I read about recently, and I’d really like to learn about alcoholism and understand it more.”

A statement like this could help ease the conversation into a more productive stage. Then instead of having an argument about social versus addictive drinking and possibly ending or breaking up the relationship because of conflict, the relationship between two people could actually develop a little farther along or deepen. And John and Mary could both learn more about each other and broaden their perspectives in the process.

Support Co-Op

Relationships may begin with just two people, but more people eventually become involved. Work friends and associates, family members, old school chums and various other assorted persons interact daily, so gaining the support and cooperation in working towards a common goal is a plus in relationship building.

To put this into perspective, we can look at John and Mary again. If John gets along fine with Mary, but can’t be in a room for 10 minutes with her dad or the rest of her family and friends, the relationship will probably eventually bottom out; i.e. not grow. However, if John can help build some type of relationship with them as Mary does, like joining and participating in a holiday meal celebration that is a plus and can help build and grow a more solid relationship.

In summary, by learning to use more of these “nuts and bolts” of relationship building, focusing on some of these basic techniques can help build and grow relationships. More can be learned about each technique by simply heading to the local library or typing in the technique into your favorite search engine. Forget that, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” saying. We’re not dogs. And humans CAN learn – at any age!

ABC’s of Healthy, Happy Relationships



For Healthy, Happy Relationships, here are some basic guidelines for reference. They are in alphabetical order only, not order of importance.

Acceptance – Don’t try to change someone. This is a must. If a person really wants to change, that person will need to be motivated and take action. Period. Also regarding acceptance, accept limitations. He is not Superman; you are not Wonder woman. No one is perfect; so do not expect perfection. Accept the little flaws that come with each person. You accept theirs; they accept yours. That’s life!

Bonding – Bonding with another person generally does take time.

Communicate – talk, listen, share the good and the bad, ask questions, compliment instead of nag or insult. In short be a friend; make a friend. That is healthy. If this bonding is lacking, it may mean professional help is needed (like a counselor or therapist) or it may be time to move on to healthier relationships.

Communications – Be open to the other person. Check judgmental attitudes at the door. And give chances. Be fair, flexible and friendly. If and when things get out of hand and it is your fault, apologize and ask forgiveness and move on. Similarly, be acceptable to apologies and grant forgiveness, too. Life is too short to stay focused on the negative too long. No need to deny it; face it, deal with it and move on past it to improve and strengthen your relationships.

Dependable – Be a friend; i.e. be dependable. Things happen from time to time and cancellations are a part of life. But on the whole, if you say you’ll do something, do it. Take responsibility for your own actions.

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Expectations – Movies, romance novels and television shows often portray life, especially human relationships, very differently than it is in the real world – this is no secret. How many people really always look like movie stars, have zero health ailments, endless income without hardly ever going to work, fabulous cars and homes, friends and family who totally adore them and come to their beckon call, no long-term problems because they all end so quickly, etc.? And who can battle serious issues like one person having an affair with someone else, and wrap the whole storyline up in two hours? Get real. Expect a little less than the media portray and learn more about humans by joining the real world scenario.

Flexible - Keep a little mystery in the relationship. Juggle your schedule and invite the other person to a surprise picnic or walk at a local public park area.

Goals - People usually have some goals together over time. Develop some together. Toss what no longer works, what you outgrew or what may no longer seem important or is finished. And then inherit or create new goals. Working toward a common cause like saving for an annual vacation or a new garden area can help people grow together.

Health – Take care of your own health and encourage others, too. Even in this day and age of cable television with movies and the Internet available 24 / 7, it's still amazing the number of people out there who can't "Just say no" to unhealthy behaviors like smoking and drug abuse. Don't be afraid to share your healthy views and encourage healthy choices and living.

Intimacy – Closeness with a person takes time to develop. And there's more to intimacy than physical contact. Intimacy can mean a hug during a tough time, a smile of encouragement in the face of adversity and compassion when you least feel like giving. Don't abuse or take advantage of the other person. And don't let yourself be abused or taken advantage of. Intimacy takes commitment and sharing.

Just say no – You don't always have to be voiceless or agree with someone in a relationship. Be able to say, "No" and be an individual, too.

Keep in Touch – Don't let life separate you too long. With technology today, you can stay in touch with cell phones and email. No need to overdo it and be obsessive and controlling, but do stay in touch off and on throughout the day with quick "Hellos" and "How are things going?"

Lemonade – Make lemonade out of those relationship lemons. And "yes" there will be some, since life is not perfect! For example, when your partner is late and you miss a movie date or restaurant reservation, don't make it a night of terror and destroy what's left when you finally do get together. Do something else instead, like relax at home with a video and scented candles, and order subs (and lemonade!)

Make the Honeymoon Last – Remember how you felt when you first got together? Do those little things that you did at the beginning and make the honeymoon last? Bring home fresh flowers, shut off the television, turn on some music and dance with your mate, compliment your mate, make dates to go to places you used to frequent (the old neighborhood pizza parlor, a local drive in, a hotel you went to on your honeymoon, etc.)

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Nuts and Bolts – Don't focus so much on the “nuts and bolts” of who said what, when, how often and why they were wrong.... In other words, sometimes during an argument, try losing your memory of who did what, when and how many times in the past. Instead, humble yourself, apologize for having messed up and hug your mate!

Open – Open windows when doors close. If you feel you've been pushed to the limit and don't want to try one more time, close the door on that angle of the issue. Take a walk, get some ice cream and cool off (literally). Then return relaxed and refreshed, and open a window to air differences.

Parental Issues - Even the best of relationships deal with someone's past parental issues from time to time. Counseling can help, yes, but something out of the blue can still trigger a parental issue that someone struggles to deal with regardless of age, it seems. In these cases, just realizing and stating that it's normal, may never get resolved and is okay to move on, can work wonders – for both parties.

Quality – With hectic schedules, quality time is important. So even if you can only meet to watch a 30-minute comedy together every evening, make and keep that date. You'll probably be especially glad you did when times get tough and have the wonderful memories to help get you by.

Respect – Respect not only each other, but each other's property, friendships, time, job and ...everything. Remember you are sharing life together and need to be courteous to one another and all the affects you.

Sharing – Likewise share and don't be stingy. “You reap what you sow,” and “You can't take it with you” when you die, as the sayings go.

Trust – Healthy relationships involve people who trust one another. One person doesn't get involved in unhealthy risks with a third party or lie to the other. There is an open, positive exchange of trust. So if this is lacking, seek help from a professional counselor, if necessary, and see what's wrong.

Understanding – Happy, healthy couples try to understand each other even if it means joining a self-help group, reading library books about something foreign or unknown, or taking time to research and delve into an issue. In other words, take time to gain knowledge and wisdom before jumping the gun on something you may not really understand.

Violence – Violence is not welcome. Period. Don't accept it. Don't dish it out. Anger Management is not just a movie term today. There really is help out there if you or your mate needs it.

Warning Signs – Healthy people are generally alert to warning signs of trouble and head them. Denial isn't part of their life.

X-Ray – Happy people in healthy relationships generally don't look at each other as they look at x-rays. They don't see close-ups of each flaw and character make up. They learn to look beyond the bare essentials and see the whole person.

Youthful Attitude – A youthful attitude can go far in relationships. Old outlooks can spawn

resentment, skepticism and other negative connotations. A little dose of daily humor (reading comics, watching or listening to comedy, etc.) and keeping in touch with youth (church activities, neighborhood / social nonprofit functions and events, etc.) can help maintain a fresh, youthful outlook.

Zombie – Don't go through life like you're a zombie! It's not up to your mate to fulfill your life. You need to take charge yourself!

ABC's of Unhealthy, Sad Relationships



Unhealthy, Sad Relationships have some general notable characteristics in common. Here are some basic guidelines for reference. They are in alphabetical order only, not order of importance.

Avoidance – Many people in unhealthy relationships simply avoid facing reality. There are many reasons for this. For instance, deep down inside, the people involved may be trying to make themselves appear superior. Or perhaps they don't want to face the fact that their mates really aren't who they say they are.

For example, Person A might cover up and make excuses for his mate, Person B, who is always late coming home from work and almost always misses family functions. Person A could be trying to avoid reality and make up excuses to cover up an affair that Person B is involved in so that it doesn't destroy their "perfect image" in everyone's eyes. Or Person A could be avoiding the fact that Person B is a workaholic.

Burnout – Although many can carry out romance throughout their entire relationships, the actual honeymoon period does have to end, in reality. And those who can keep the "love" fires burning, not 24 / 7 but off and on regularly during their relationship, have better chances of healthier relationships than those who suffer burnout and don't know where to go or who turn to for unhealthy solutions. In short, every relationship has its highs and lows. During the low times, like maybe when one person begins to feel disillusioned with marriage, or maybe trapped, tired, helpless, depressed or let down, if this person reaches out to unhealthy alternatives, like getting a fake substitution – maybe seeking another mate in secret, getting "high," or some other negative behavior, once-healthy relationships can suffer. Instead, the couple needs to face issues together; add some new goals to the relationship, do some fun things together more, talk more, etc.

Compatibility Issues – Opposites attract; or do they? Sure it's great to have some "spice" in your life. But relationships are about getting your needs met – at least on some level. And constant negativity can certainly hinder intimacy. So those who have a difficult time focusing on what attracted them to their mates in the first place can suffer unhealthy, sad relationships, constantly in conflict over issues with which they can't agree.

Devotional Void – A lack of commitment or ardent love can make for unhappy relationships. Being friends or roommates is one thing. Being committed, loving soul mates is another. Being “in love” 24/7 doesn’t necessarily have to be a requirement, but being in a “loving” committed relationship can make the difference.

Enthusiasm Dwindles – If you don’t add in some spice once in awhile, you can get the same old, same old. Couples caught up in routines can lose that spark of enthusiasm; i.e. zest of life in their relationships if they forget to be spontaneous once in awhile or forget to flavor their relationship with fun, adventure, romance.

Forgiveness Void – No one is perfect. Mistakes are a part of life. Those unwilling or unable to forgive can pretty much count on having more unhealthy relationships over time. Relationships based or growing on anger, spite, disgust, resentment or other negative feelings associated with lack of forgiveness are like wilted flowers. They need tending to or they’ll die.

Guise - Simulated relationships or those under the guise of having a solid, happy relationship are not destined for success, on the whole. Or rather false is as false does, as Forest Gump might say. Pretending wears thin and doesn’t last long.

Harm – Harmful thoughts, words and actions can sure lead to unhealthy relationships. An occasional outbreak during a stressful moment might be considered normal like swearing; i.e. if someone hasn’t been raped, battered (or other severe trauma has occurred) by the other party. However, harmful, violent actions such as those and repeated verbal negativity is abusive and not healthy in relationships – or life.

Indulgence – Instant gratification or indulgence of unhealthy behaviors is a sign of trouble. Grabbing chocolate to satisfy a craving is one thing. Grabbing illicit drugs or another mate in secrecy is another. Yielding to unhealthy temptations and desires is a pathway to unhealthy relationships.

Just say yes – Not being able to draw boundaries or sustain limits is another possible path to sad relationships. For example, if one person in the relationship has a difficult time saying “No” and setting limits, his or her mate could always come in second, third or fourth - - rarely first in the other person’s eyes and agenda. And while it’s fine to take a back seat once in awhile, people make time for priorities and in healthy relationships, both parties feel and share the value of being number one with one another.

Kick the Dog – Kicking the dog, not in a literal sense (although that would be negative, too!) is characteristic of unhealthy relationships. For example, if a person comes home angry and passes this anger on to the dog by kicking it, that is not a healthy release of anger. The unhealthier people are, the unhealthier they generally deal with stress. Help is available.

Lemons – Unhealthy relationships often have at least one party who can’t seem to make lemonade out of life’s lemons. Maybe he or she has the wrong recipe. Or maybe the person is a bad cook. But assistance is needed in this department!

Management Mania – Remember the “Odd Couple?” A super manager personality can ruin an otherwise healthy relationship. Likewise a super sloth can wreak one, too. A little give and take is called

for.

“Neverland” – Ever heard something this in an argument, “You never....?” Well trips to Neverland are for Peter Pan. Skip the “always” and “nevers” in arguments and avoid unhealthy relationship issues. It’s rare that someone does or does not do something 100 percent of the time. Memories just seem to fail during opportunistic, stressful episodes sometimes (not always, though!)

Ominous – Bad or ominous feelings, an omen...a feeling deep inside that tells you something is wrong - this often accompanies unhealthy relationships.

Pressure – When one party pressures (or forces) the other to have sex, this is characteristic of an unhealthy relationship.

Questions – Part of communicating is asking and answering questions. If this process causes problems, i.e. even the simplest of questions arouses anger, suspicions, fighting, etc., this is a trait often found with unhealthy relationships. The party who has difficulty answering questions may be hiding something, dealing with control issues or dealing with substance abuse (or other).

Responds Inappropriately – Some characteristics of unhealthy relationships include playing head games, trying to humiliate, using threats, insults or jealousy. These inappropriate responses suggest unhealthy environment between the couple.

Silence – Silence isn’t always golden, as the saying goes. If one person shuns or ignores the other, outside of a solitary or very brief occurrence, this can reflect an unhealthy relationship.

Treatment – If healthcare treatments are being ignored or stopped without the help of a professional; for example, in the case of stopping anti-depressant medication after a severe (negative) episode (like suicide), this can signal an unhealthy relationship. People need to take care of themselves and not leave everything up to their mates in relationships.

Untidy / Unkempt – When one or both partners disregards physical appearance for the duration (long-term, not just for a weekend), this signals an unhealthy relationship. One or both could be abusing substances, for example, or suffering depression.

Verbal Abuse /Violate – When one or both partners use verbal abuse and / or violate or cause harm to the other’s person or personal property, things or friends, this can be a red flag for an unhealthy relationship. People should respect each other and each other’s property, things and friends. And verbal abuse is not appropriate.

Weapons – Threatening a partner with a weapon, even if it’s a household (or other) item used as a weapon is a sign of an unhealthy relationship.

Copy – A trait of an unhappy relationship can be when a person is copying another, failing to be himself or herself. Some personality disorders are also characterized by this trait that reportedly shows up in a number of unhealthy relationships. And help is available.

Youthful Outlook / Emotions – An energetic, youthful attitude toward life is one thing. Youthful expectations; i.e. outlook, and emotions can be characteristic of unhealthy partners. Growing couples need maturity as they grow together and face adult issues. Childish displays of anger, hostility, selfishness, etc., don't have much place in healthy, growing partnerships.

Zero – Growing relationships need a foundation. Zero to grow on is difficult to multiply. Got to start somewhere!

Dating & Relationship Resources

Support and help is available for relationships in many forms. And with the Internet, there is now help available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Here are some places to turn below.

Online Support:

[About.com/People](#) – Popular resource sections focus on Dating Advice, Sexuality and Spirituality, Seniors, Marriage, Divorce, Honeymoon Getaways and more. Surf categories for chat rooms, forums and other online communication / tools and targeted support.

[LoveTactics.com](#) – sponsor of About.com, well known for Internet resources. This site focuses on Lost Love, Dating, Relationship and Commitment areas. Site features articles and consultation options.

[Psychologytoday.com](#) – Relationships (left-hand column category). Then choose from dozen of relationship topics that contain hundreds of articles to view online. Need help? Ask their therapist a question for \$19.95 online (educational purposes only – see your healthcare provider for therapist referrals and help.) The site also shows therapists available throughout the different states for help locating someone near you.

[Sage-Hearts.com](#) – Site presents overview of various dating services and shares a variety of dating success stories and tips, books, movies and poems section, and top dating sites on the Internet with ratings.

Mail / Phone Contacts:

The American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT), PO Box 5488 Richmond, VA 23220-0488. Phone: 804-644-3288.

American Psychological Association 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-4242. Telephone: 800-374-2721.

Other:

For other online and offline recommendations, it may be safer to go through a favorite magazine site (like in Psychology Today above) and search contacts. Also check in the Yellow Pages under listings for

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Therapists, Psychologists, Psychoanalysts and Counselors. Other methods of finding help are to ask friends, relatives, colleagues, church members or clergy for assistance and recommendations.

Books:

The Relationship Rescue Workbook, by Phillip C. McGraw; Hyperion (October 4, 2000).

Communication Miracles for Couples: Easy and Effective Tools to Create More Love and Less Conflict, by Jonathan Robinson; Conari Press (June 1, 1997).

We Love Each Other, But...: A Leading Couples Therapist Shares the Simple Secrets That Will Help Save Your Relationship, by Ellen F. Wachtel; Golden Books (February 1, 1999).

Dating & Relationship Tips

Enjoy the variety of dating and relationship building tips that follow. They are listed in no particular order.

Show Off – If you have a great body you're trying to show off and young physical appearance, yet worry because you still seem to have difficulty finding dates and establishing relationships, here are some pointers. Turn off the "ME" focus. Others tend to see that as boorish and think you only care about yourself, not others and certainly not them. Instead, turn the focus on outside interests that the other person can relate to, even if it has to be the weather. For help, tune in to an online news source like CNN or subscribe to a national or other major newspaper or magazine like *Newsweek* or head to the public library for the latest news briefs. Online dating might be a good outlet for you, to as it generally offers a place to list all your great physical qualities as well as outside interests and more, presenting a more rounded dating candidate. Then those who are VERY interested in great abs, youthful appeal, etc. will be able to check you out. And those who are interested in the other interests can focus on those, too.

Sit, Don't Take a Stand – Instead of voicing your opinions over issues that you pretty well know cause heated arguments, don't take a stand. Just sit them out. There's no shame in passing up an argument. For example, if you both call yourselves "Christians," yet one of you firmly has a complete set of rules and regulations about what a "Christian" really is, and doesn't hesitate to voice this, skip over conversations about religion. If you have to, simply say something along the lines of, "This gets us too heated, so let's pass on it for now and move on to something else." Agree that it's okay to disagree. Because it is!

Traditions – Keep up with some old traditions from each family. Alter some; create new ones. The main thing here is to make positive memories that you can share and relive over and over, especially during rough spots when you can't remember why you are together. Traditions can be like glue and bind you with a common past.

Sex VS Love – Sex and love are not the same thing. Learn the difference and don't measure love by your hormones.

Negotiator – Forget “his” and “hers” roles and who “should” do what when...Learn to negotiate. What works one day may not work another when timing is off, kids are on the run and disaster strikes, for instance, when your mother-in-law drops by unexpectedly.

Love and Hate – Love your mate. It is OK to strongly dislike (or “maybe” hate) a **behavior**, like cracking knuckles or biting nails. But remember to love the person.

Online (and Classified Ad) Dating

The Internet is still pretty safe overall, even for seniors, according to research of various Internet safety sites like WiredSafety.org who estimated a 90 – 97 percent “terrific” Internet. People are chatting with one another, making cyber-dates. However, there are some general rules of Internet etiquette or “netiquette” and some precautions to take for possible dangers lurking there. Here are some pointers compiled from several websites experienced in cyber-dating techniques and most tips work for those who reply to classified ads, too.

You can get greater details about online dating in **part 2** of this book.

Safety Tips

1. Do Not Give Out Personal Information - Whether it's via email, online chat rooms, message



boards, in your personal ad, etc., do not disclose your personal information like your complete name, address, telephone number, work place, etc. And use a third party email address instead of one with your domain or work domain, too, that is easily traceable. For example, instead of using joe@seniortimes.com, set up an email account like joe@yahoo.com or joe@hotmail.com (search “free email accounts for places like this”). Preferred dating sites offer email forwarding so that members do not see private information like this. So if you are on one that differs or makes you uncomfortable, move along and click elsewhere.

2. Do Not Lie - Be up front about your age and appearance. Better to not be caught in lies later on or lead someone on falsely.

3. Be Tactful and Leary - Do not believe everything you read in posts, in emails; in general online. You could be chatting with a child or someone faking their sexual orientation. The odds are that you will probably encounter someone a tad “undesirable” from time to time, so try to use appropriate replies, using tact, or ignore the encounter, if it suits the situation.

4. Use Caution in Sharing Images - Whenever you think about sharing a digital photo online, keep in mind that it may be possible for thousands to see it on the Internet, not just one person. Plus your photo can be copied, altered with different software out there today and posted elsewhere. If you do use your

image, send one that shows you with a warm smile, not a frown.

5. Ask if Unsure - Go slow like the tortoise in the race with the hare and ask questions if you are unsure how to proceed in your contact and communications. Contact the site owner or webmaster (check for contact info when you register), ask trusted friends for helpful resources, check with local authorities. Remember that old adage, “Better safe than sorry!”

6. Be careful if you decide to meet for the first date. Remember there is safety in numbers, so meet in a public place with other friends around.

7. Keep copies of communications in a file so that you can show friends or the law in case your meeting or continued contact takes a bad turn. And do report any problems and cooperate with authorities. They can get information from your computer and communications to aid in tracking down culprits in some cases. Don’t try to take matters into your own hands and stalk the culprit yourself, though. Be safe.

8. Let men instigate online and offline relationships. Men still like to pursue. Online studies show that this has proven safer, too, with Internet dating. Men should make the first email move. And women should NOT reply to men’s ads; let the men pursue. (Sorry guys!)

9. So that you don’t appear anxious or desperate or both, generally **wait for a day or 24-hour period before replying**. And forget about replying on weekend and holidays, at least at first, and being available via instant messaging. This is especially important for women (double standards are still around and even exist in the Internet dating scene) – you want to “appear” socially active, confident – blah, blah, blah, even if you are just home washing your hair.

10. Don’t date someone who is already married to someone else – even if that person says he or she is getting a divorce. Let the divorce happen first. Otherwise things could get ugly. And you may even have to face the spouse / ex-spouse and children down the road. So think of others, too, when even considering someone who is not single.

11. If after several emails or letters you decide to talk on the phone, **keep the first call short, around 10 minutes**. Plan to have to “rush” off. Your goal is to hear the person’s voice and talk a short while only, not seeming over anxious.

12. Some gents do complain that the ladies do not reply. So ladies, reply! **At least say, “No, thank you.”**

Netiquette

Here are some general guidelines to refer to in your online communications.

- Use respectful tones and wording. Swear words and hurtful remarks are not good for anyone. If someone presses you, for example, to share confidential information that you shouldn’t, just say, “No” and tell the site monitors / webmaster of the forum, chat room or

online dating site, if necessary.

- Look for dating and other resource websites that list street addresses instead of post office boxes or nothing at all. Ask friends for referrals.
- Try to avoid stretching the truth about your accomplishments, job title, etc. Then if a relationship develops, things will run much smoother.
- Try to avoid many 1-word replies and 1-sentence communications. Take some time to develop your thoughts and share in your paragraphs. In short, be a friend.
- All capital letters mean “shouting” and is difficult to read at any length.

Take care and have fun with your cyber-dating.

Lowdown on Long Lasting Love

Now it's time to take a look at the lowdown on how to handle long lasting love. Here are some pointers on how to deal with some of the top issues that when mishandled, can separate the men from the boys, as they say, or rather the successful couples from the less-successful ones.

Conflict Management- The key here is to realize that most couples do not solve every issue. In fact, reports show that couples don't solve most of their problems. So if you think your girlfriends or buddies are winning more frequent battles than you, forget about it. It's not happening.

Next realize that statistics still reflect about a 50 percent survival rate for married couples long-term. (I.E. the other half divorce). And for those who do make it, it's not so much about whether or not they “love” each other more than the divorced people did. It's generally more about that fact that they developed better communication skills and learned to understand each other better. And developed and learning - these are action verbs.

As you develop and learn your own job skills for advancement, so can you and should you do the same for relationship advancement. There is no shame in reaching out and improving in this area. Tips for developing better communication skills and learning to understand your mate better; i.e. improve conflict management, are as follows:

1. Take turns speaking and listening to each other. As a speaker, speak only for yourself and keep your comments brief. The stop and invite the listener to sum up what you said (to make sure he or she understood).
2. Then allow the other person to take over and follow the same format.
3. Share back and forth in this same manner, jotting down conflict management notes as needed for following up later and establishing new boundaries in your relationship.

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Some tips for handling conflict resolutions are:

- A. Start with the person presenting his or her complaint in a general format, without blame. For example, instead of saying, “You keep leaving dirty dishes out on the counter all night;” say “I don’t like it when dirty dishes are left out on the counter. During my college days, that attracted cockroaches.”
- B. Encourage each other to come to an agreement in a calm, friendly manner. Negotiate. Give and take. Maybe the dishes from late night snacks don’t have to be washed with soap and hot water, but can simply be rinsed off instead and stacked in the sink’s dishpan or strainer, for instance.
- C. If negativity starts, stop it ASAP. In the above example, maybe the mate wants all sinks clear and free for emptying coffee cups and other snack and breakfast dishes. So this person starts swearing, calling the other person a lazy idiot or something...STOP.
- D. Calm things back down. Use hand signals like coaches do in sports, if necessary. Men can often relate to this. Do a “time out” mode. And take a breather or break for a few minutes.
- E. Then go back to where things were fine, just before step “C.” Inject some humor and try to resolve the conflict again. Maybe joke about how you pay much more for your residence now and don’t have cockroach problems. And that OK, one sink can be left clear, the other will hold a strainer of rinsed-off items. Any dirty ones can be placed / stacked on one side of the strainer; rinsed items on the other. Done deal!

Money Management – Some counselors say that money handling is the number one priority issue of conflict among couples. Problems arise with how money is viewed, how it should be save, spent and even earned. So here are some general guidelines to money management to help iron out some financial issues for couples.

1. Decide to set aside some time for discussing your financial matters in peace and quiet. Doing this quarterly (or monthly, if time and patience allow) is a good idea. Then you can make sure your budget is on track and allow a glance ahead at possible items coming up that may have been missed (like renewal of driver’s licenses) and look back to see how you are doing.
2. Gather all of your budgeting materials in one place; notebook paper, 3-prong folder with pockets for storing bills as they arrive in the mail, stamps, calculator, envelopes, check book, savings book, pencil, pen. When it’s time to work on your finances, bring everything out at once (maybe store in a special drawer or box for handy pick-up-and-go.)
3. On a sheet of notebook paper (or a sheet from a budget planning guidebook or software print out), list each monthly expense; rent / house payment, each utility, charities / tithing, grocery money, misc. funds (to allow for medicines, snacks, CD rental, etc.), car payments, insurance, credit card payments, etc. For guidelines, there are several things you can do; check with your local bank for budget planning help, ask a librarian for help finding budget books, check your

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computer's software (Microsoft Word has some business / budgeting sheets that could be altered to fit your family planning needs, for instance), visit local office supply stores to see which types of budget planner notebooks and guide they may have available, surf online or use the following one enclosed and revise it to suit your needs. Hint: visit www.digital-women.com/daily-planner for lots of planner pages to choose from (for men and women!)

4. Fill in the blanks on your budget planner page. List how much each monthly payment is in #3 above. Then total the list to see how much income you need to cover all your expenses.
5. Note your incomes in a separate column off to the side. Does your income exceed your expense total? If so, great. Simply have fun choosing what you'd like to both do with your extra income, with long-term and short-term goals that are compatible with both of you. If not, if income does not exceed expenses, and this is the area where discourse usually strikes, it's time to whittle down your expenses and / or earn extra income. Here are tips on whittling down income and being more budget-conscious with your available funds:
 - A. Use coupons, even cyber-ones like from www.valpak.com
 - B. Check with your insurance about higher deductibles and any special rate savings programs they may have (like good driving discounts).
 - C. Visit second hand stores for used books and clothing.
 - D. Donate time and volunteer work instead of tithing money
 - E. Buy no-name foods, toiletry and household items (shampoos, deodorants, light bulbs, etc.) instead of brand names.
 - F. Cook at home more as entertainment and invite your neighbors and friends over. And skip eating out so much, renting CD / DVDs and going to movies.
 - G. Track and monitor your spending. Jot purchases in a notebook and keep handy with your checkbook for quick reference. Review and see how you do weekly. Improve!
 - H. Plan ahead. For example, save a little each month for Christmas so that in December, you'll already have what you need for gifts already saved up. Likewise for annual insurance billings (like for the house) or for any other annual billings.
 - I. See if you can trade services with others. For example, if you have a computer and can toss up a decent web page maybe you can create web pages for small business in the area in exchange for gift cards to use in their stores.
 - J. Sell some of your stuff – try online auctions, garage sales, cheap classifieds, bulletin boards around town...

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K. Resist the urge to “immediately” fulfill a want. Instead, keep a list going of “wants.” If an item has been on there for a year, for example, then begin shopping for it. Look for bargains, try to trade for it, negotiate for a better deal. Waiting generally means you’ll really want it more (or not, and cross it off your list) and will actually USE it when you get it and not just toss it in a pile with other unopened or hardly used things that you just HAD to have.

L. Check out library books like:

The Cheapskate Monthly Money Makeover, by Mary Hunt; St. Martin's Press; Reissue edition (March 1, 1995).

Miserly Moms: Living on One Income in a Two-Income Economy, by Jonni McCoy; Bethany House Publishers; 3rd edition (October 1, 2001).

The Complete Cheapskate: How to Get Out of Debt, Stay Out, and Break Free from Money Worries Forever, by Mary E. Hunt, Mary Hunt; St. Martin's Griffin; 1st edition (August 1, 2003).

Self-Help Guide

Self-help to help your relationship improve, here are some exercises to take by yourself and share with your mate. Take them slow and steady, at your own pace. Have fun with them. (There are no grades!)

Instructions: Jot your replies down on paper if you like or in a private “couple’s” journal for future reference. Add to them, modify them, edit them as you’d like. The key is to have fun, learn more about yourself, your mate and your relationship together, and grow.

Exercise A: List your three best traits. Then list your mate’s top three traits you admire.

Exercise B: List the top three areas in your life that you would like to work on improving. These can be any range of things from improving income to education to giving more, losing more weight, being less shy, etc. Then list the top three areas in your mate’s life that you’d like to see improved.

Fill in the blanks, and then have your mate reply to the same questions. Take turns reading your replies and learning more about each other:

Regarding my appearance, I think I am _____

A funny thing that happened to me was _____

One place I would love to visit is _____

If money was no object, I would buy _____

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A person who meant a lot to me while I was growing up is _____ because

A major lesson I learned in life is _____

If I could have any job in the world, it would be _____

A hero of mine is (can be fictional) _____

If a dream could come true, I'd like _____

One way I'd like to give back would be _____

On a personal note, here is where I would like to be:

1 year from now: _____

3 years from now: _____

5 years from now: _____

As a couple, here is where I'd like us to be:

1 year from now: _____

3 years from now: _____

5 years from now: _____

One thing about you that makes me smile is _____

I'll always remember this about you _____

Exercise: List what you feel is good about your relationship.

Exercise: List what you feel could use work / improvement in your relationship.

Exercise: How could you help improve your relationship? And how do you think your partner could help improve the relationship?

Reply:

1. What is the best memory that comes to mind about your mate?

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2. What do you see in the future for your relationship: Location? Jobs? House? Pets? Children? Travel?
3. What fun things would you like to try and do with your mate more (Ballroom dancing? Gourmet cooking? Snow skiing? Other?) When will you schedule one of these new things?

In summary, since the latest reports show that just about anyone and everyone can learn the important social skills needed for relationship building, use what you can of this guide and its resources mentioned to focus on your own Healthy Relationships. Be alert to possible problem areas, and take action to improve your life.

Addendum: Generic Budget Worksheet

Monthly Budget Guide	Amount
Income	
Person A: Employment net income (after taxes)	
Other income	
Person B: Employment net income (after taxes)	
Other income	
TOTAL INCOME	
	Amount Budgeted
Mortgage / Rent	
Cable / Internet Access	
Cell Phones	
Utilities (gas, electric, H2O)	
Phone (landline)	
Groceries	
Insurance (Car/Home/Life)	
Car Payment	
Auto Insurance	
Gas	
Misc (car maintenance, clothes, entertainment, emergency, etc.)	
Credit card payments	
Savings / Investments	
Other expenses	
TOTAL EXPENSES	
INCOME – EXPENSES:	



Part 2

5 Steps to Online Dating Success

What You Need to Know About Online Dating... First!



Online dating is not all fun and games and there are a lot of things that a person has to know about online dating before one gets into the intricacies of it. Online dating may seem to be the simplest thing in the world but it is not. It should be viewed in all earnestness or things could go haywire. Every game has its rules and unless you know all the rules you just can't become a good player and eventually a winner.

Tastes Differ

There are so many kinds of people around. Just look around you, how many people

you know look the same?

Sizes, builds, shapes, features... they are all so different.

And that is just about the external appearances. And when it comes to character, it becomes a very different story altogether. Take a trip down memory lane, go back to your classrooms and take a look around.

A classroom is one place where we get to interact with a lot of different people on a very close basis. We get to rub shoulders and corners with very different people and we get to know them on a one to one basis. So how many of your classmates did you genuinely like?

I don't mean like them as classmates but as people. Was it easy to get along with all of them? That is why we often end up with best friends or clichés in classrooms.

We do not and do not have to like every body. The tastes and interests of one person might match with ours while the tastes and interests of another person may be at complete loggerheads with ours.

So when it comes to dating, it is very much the same story. But over here there are some strings attached. Unlike in a classroom contact, most people go on dates with a more impressive purpose, and that is to find life mate. There are a hundred and one things that should match before two people decide to spend the rest of their lives with each other.

Many people are of the opinion that they do not need any help with dating. They may be right because no body knows a person's tastes and likes better than the person himself or herself.

Maybe most of us do not need any help in making the right choice but isn't it good to get a few pointers on the dating process as such, particularly on Online dating? It is with this objective that this matter was prepared so that the thousands who are now availing of Internet dating may get the best out of it.

What Makes Online Dating So Different?

We, human beings have been in this world for so many thousands of years. And since the beginning people have been choosing partners. Cultures across the world are very different and we can come across so many different ways in which people choose their life mates.

But the concept of finding a life partner with the help of the Internet is a fairly recent concept when compared with the history of mankind as such. Of course the Internet and computers have influenced man's life so much that it is no surprise that in the matters of finding a suitable partner too, the Internet has made its presence felt.

Online dating is; in simple words, finding a partner with the help of a machine namely the computer via the Internet. That itself makes the idea and the process a very novel one indeed, Hundreds of happy people across the globe have been successful in finding suitable partners by the means of online dating.

But to be frank with you, a lot of not-so-lucky persons have been goofed and jilted by the same process. So in order to make sure that you find a place in the first list let us go into the details of online dating.

The Magic of the Internet



Everything that applies to the Internet, applies to Online dating as well. The Internet as we know allows for unlimited possibilities in communication, and it is this feature that has proved to be at the same time the biggest boon, as well as bane for online dating.

People can start from scratch and get to know everything about each other before the actual meeting takes place. Tastes and preferences, likes and dislikes, interests and obsessions can be discussed on a one to one basis so that when the meeting actually takes place these two people are not in the

least strangers to each other. Wonderful, isn't it?

But at the same time this possibility for unlimited communication leaves a lot of space for guile as well. The human race is endowed with a remarkable ability to use, misuse and abuse the same thing. And naturally, online dating too has been and is still being used for vile purposes.

The person who is misusing this facility may either be a practical joker or may be someone with more devious intentions who is out to get some victims. It is because of this reason that a little bit of homework is good before you actually hit the road.

But you do not have to worry, the home work has already been painstakingly done for you and all you have to do is run your eyes along the following lines and you will be all set to strike gold.

How Did Online Dating Become So Popular?

The reason is pretty simple. It is very much the same reason that the Internet itself became so popular. The Internet opens up a whole new world of communication and contact. And the reasons for this are

given below.

- **Speed:** Try to picture what used to happen earlier in the days when people had to depend on the good old' postal system. During those days, a person had to wait for one or two days for a letter to get across to a person who lived in the same state itself. The second person in turn would take one or two days to respond and this letter would take on or two days to get back to the first person.

So in effect, a single correspondence would stretch over a week. But now it's a totally different story. The time taken for the first letter and the response has been brought to an amazing 2 minutes!

Waiting may make the heart grow fonder but e-mail makes two people get close faster!

- **Privacy:** The Internet provides for absolute privacy too. One can carry out communication with another person in the absolute privacy of one's bedroom or bath room or wherever one chooses to be. There is no fear of eavesdropping (ugh) or over hearing (shudder!) thanks to e-mail and chat facilities.
- **Options and Opportunities:** The Internet provides for other options like voice chat or video conferencing and stops short only of the physical touch. But then who would want to start a relationship by touching right away?

You can see a person, talk to a person, and listen to the person's voice, can you think of a better way to start a date?

- **Economy:** All this and more it is possible thanks to the Internet and the best part is that all this comes to you for peanuts. All you need is a PC (who doesn't have one?) and an Internet Connection (how can anybody live without one?) and you are all set. The only thing more you could ask for is a step-by-step guide to find your dream date...well here it is!

So what are we waiting for?

Be Clear About What You Want

We all know that man is a social being. However man is also a lonely being. (And when we say man, we mean women too). Man longs for company.

Company not just from friends and the family, but from that special person with whom he or she can share those sweet nothings, those simple pleasures and pains, someone with whom he or she can build a whole new life, someone with whom he or she can raise a family of his or her own.

Now this is a fundamental need of man: to find a life mate. And the most popular method used for this is dating. When we talk about dating in the very finest sense of the word, please understand that dating is not to be viewed as a precursor for sleeping together. It is much more than that. It is the first step towards choosing a life partner and online dating has made the whole process a lot simpler now.

Marriage Versus A Casual Relationship



Now what you do and what you want is entirely your business. I don't want to sound nosey but I would like to draw a fine line between the kind of dating that is involved in these two quests.

Of course we are all grown up and so let us act like grown ups. Obviously in a casual relationship we are looking for fun. And mind you, fun can have a lot of connotations. So here the object of one's desire will obviously be a person who is not inclined towards a serious relationship.

If both parties are of the same view then it is well and good because they understand each other perfectly and do not expect much from such a relationship. This leaves no room for heartbreak.

It is when one party is in for something more serious and the other party is into sheer frivolousness that the problems start. So you should

be absolutely clear about what you are looking for from the start, and you should make your intentions very clear to the other person.

At the same time you should have no doubts about the intentions of the other person as well. Remember, even if it is a casual relationship, there should be mutual understanding at least about the nature of the relationship.

Of course, there is yet another possibility where a casual relationship can blossom into something more serious. But, again in such cases it is your instincts that can help you identify what is good and what is bad.

No matter how strong a person is, anyone can be taken for a ride or be taken for granted. Being jilted is never a nice experience. So those of you who are going in for a casual relationship, for heavens sake, be on your guard! Marriage is altogether a different story but we will deal with that later.

Dating Comes From a Fundamental Need

Let's face it, of course sex is important, but sex is by far NOT the most important reason for dating.

Important! Maybe during the age of thoughtless youth, when new hormones are being pumped in and out, sex is on every one's mind. But as one matures (mind you that does not mean growing old and gray) sex takes the back seat and mutual support, likes and dislikes, cooperation, caring and sharing come to the forefront. We start thinking about building up a world of our own and we need someone to share it with, and not just someone to sleep with.

Sex is a fundamental need of every human being. We all have it in us to give and receive physical pleasure. But when you sit and think about it for a minute, you can see that this urge is actually the result of another urge.

There is a more primary urge in every human being to breed and produce offspring, and it is this urge that gives rise to such a powerful sexual desire. But whatever be the urge, the most dignified means to satisfy it is dating.

Nobody, not one of us, is complete without a partner; and it is to satisfy this need that people date. Because of this, the rest of this manual will be dedicated not to finding the right sex partner, but to finding the right life partner.

Online Dating Is Here To Stay



Let's accept the fact that dating couldn't really get better. Online dating is THE real thing. Let's compare it to the old system of evening balls or social gatherings. Imagine you are this big gathering where there are a lot of men and women looking out for suitable partners.

Suppose you bump into one or two people with whom you seem to strike an immediate rapport. You are then able to take this person out onto a balcony with just the moon to keep an eye on you.

You get to talk to this person for hours and hours; just talk and nothing else. You get to discuss likes and dislikes and finally when it is time to part you leave with a promise to meet on a following day at an equally

enjoyable spot. These talks go on for days and weeks and finally you decide that this indeed is the person with whom you want to spend the rest of your life with.

Then of course you start meeting in more open places, you hold hands and even kiss. You begin to go out for lunch and dinner and spend even more intimate time together. When the moment is right and your decision is made, it then becomes time for you to say, "I do."

Sigh! It sounds like a nice fairy tale, doesn't it?

Well it needn't be. It could be your own love story because the concept of online dating is just what has been described above. If you click the right buttons everything could work out fine for you and we have evidence to prove it. Just take a look at the figures given below and you can behold for yourself what a universal phenomenon online dating has already become.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the best things about online dating is that it affords a lot of privacy. You can chat for hours, video conference, or do whatever it is you care to do without arousing the interest of others or attracting the wrong kind of attention. All you need is a computer and Internet access everything becomes as discreet as can be. But along with that, may I add that we need a little bit of

common sense as well or else we might find ourselves within the clutches of many lurid monsters lurking out there.

Another good thing about online dating is that it saves a lot of money which otherwise you would have had to splurge each time you took someone out on a date. It is because of these reasons and many more personal reasons that thousands of people find online dating to be a great convenience.

How to Get the Most Out Of Online Dating

Many people who decide to give online dating a try often end up with their hair singed and fingers burnt.

The reason we decided to put together such a manual is that online dating is not as simple as it looks. You need to know how to go about it in order to get the best out of it. Most people do not like to take chances and when it comes to finding a life partner people do not want to take chances at all.

But you can relax for through this manual we will be dealing with all the do's and the don'ts and so the whole process will be quite easy and enjoyable to you. This manual will provide you with step-by-step instructions on how to being online dating.

We have no doubts about the decision-making abilities of our readers and so we do not propose to give a lot of advice on the issue. Our purpose is simply to provide a couple of guidelines which we hope our readers will find valuable as they proceed in the attempt to find the perfect partner.

Step 1: Getting Started

Only fools rush in where angels fear to tread.



It is always best to approach unfamiliar territory with caution. You need to plan before you actually go out there and start dealing your cards. Be sure about yourself and be sure about what you want. Just because anyone and everyone can type out whatever they want in a chat room doesn't mean that we have to do the same.

The Internet has a wonderful quality of being accessible to every one. But this same quality attracts all kinds of people into it. But just because a lot of people who enter a chat room have only dirt on their minds, it doesn't mean that everyone is like that. If you stick to the class that you have and maintain your poise, you can indeed get the right kind of response.

There are a lot of nice people using the Internet, but it all depends on what you do. Do unto others what you want them to do to you is the golden rule that applies here. There are no rules for the game. All are players out there. But just because others are ruffians, it doesn't mean that you have to be one too. Your approach is the only thing that can get you the kind of response that you want.

I don't think that it is very sensible to decide all of the sudden that you would like to use the Internet to get a date. By just entering a chat room and saying "I'm available" you are merely putting yourself up for sale, and will most likely not get the results you desire.

One point that all of us have to understand is that in a chat room, all are equal. Do not go by the misconception that entering a chat room is like sauntering into a ball room dressed in your best. Then everyone turns to stare at you and the most eligible person (read that as the sexiest person of the opposite sex) catches your eye and makes his or her way towards you.

That kind of thing happens only on James Bond movies and we all know that James Bond never goes in for a serious relationship. It's all fun and games for him.

Where Do You Start?

The first tip we would like to give you is NOT to go straight away into a singles' chat room and try to find somebody who would interest you. All of us know that most of such chat rooms are virtually flooded with people who have only one thing on their mind - sex. So, no matter what you ask for, it always ends up in that and the purpose is defeated. You will never get the kind of person who kind of matches your interests and tastes.

Sometimes it can really get quite infuriating. Everything starts off well. You are having a nice conversation with a person and warming up when all of the sudden, the topic moves towards the three letter word. You let out a sigh and either has to bar messages from that person and risk the person bad mouthing you in a public chat room. Usually you have to leave the chat room all together.

In other words, it is the easiest thing to get someone to sleep with you but if you are looking for something more enduring, like a partner for life, then you are going to have to be a little more patient. The pick of the litter is not easy to find. But you do find it; it is going to be worth the effort.

So instead of going into a singles' chat room, what you could do is, you could try the whole thing out from a different angle. You could try working backwards.

More than Looks



Sit for a minute or two and try and think about the things that interest you and things that you would find interesting in a person.

By 'things' over here I am not referring to physical attributes. I am not referring to something that might interest you in a person's physical appearance. Again the distinction has to be drawn between a serious relationship and a casual relationship. In a casual relationship, the importance is always for the physical attributes. We are more concerned with what the person looks like and what the person has been endowed with.

On the other hand, if we have a serious relationship, then the physical qualities are not so important. Compatibility is probably the most important factor over here. Along with that there are certain qualities that obviously we will be looking out for. We are talking about qualities of the mind. After all,

beauty is only skin-deep!

This idea might sound strange, but it is actually true. The idea is that it is possible to grow to like the looks of a person. Once you find the character of the person agreeable you will start liking the person as a whole. It is entirely possible to fall in love with a person if the person does not look like a movie star. That is one of the tricks that nature plays.

There are many people who insist on taking a look at the other person's picture before actually committing to a relationship. They might have their reasons of course, but I, for one, feel that such a decision based largely on looks is more suitable for a casual relationship. It is bound to sizzle off after some time. After all, how long can you keep staring at a person? And what happens if the person doesn't stare back at you?

Or even worse, what happens if you find the person staring at another person? Looks may be important, but they certainly are not the most important thing and should never be used as the deciding factor if you are thinking about a serious relationship.

Common Interests

A human being is not like a piece of glass through which you can look and see the other side. A human being is more like a diamond, which when held against light reflects and deflects light so that a myriad of colors are seen. We're complex.

We have a lot of interest and the interests of one person need not match with the interests of another. But thankfully the interests are not as numerous as human beings. So we are bound to find a lot of people who share our interests. And if we can find someone like that, then our search should end there. So, what are your interests? That is something for you to find out.



Mind you, you might have to do some serious thinking before you level down your preferences. There might be a lot of things that you enjoy doing but about which you have given a second thought.

Your interests could be something like sports or outdoor activities. Or you could think of interests like social work or cross-words or religious interests. Keep the ball rolling; please understand that the words I have listed here are mere suggestions.

Your tastes and interests could be very different. So let them be. And once you have decided on what your interests are then half the story is done.

What Interests You In A Person?

This is probably the more important part of the story. Each one of us has to sit and think about what we would like in another person. Having the same interests doesn't necessarily mean that you can get along with a person.

For example, if you a person who likes to talk a lot, it doesn't mean that you could like another person who likes to talk a lot as well. If two people try to keep talking at the same time then obviously, there cannot be any dialogue.

So also, if you are the silent reserved type and the other person too is the silent reserved type, the there will hardly be any dialogue at all! The word over here is "compatible." The interests of partners should complement each other and not clash.

Keyword Searches

So now that you have decided what is it that interests you in a person and what your interests and tastes are, try such key word searches on a search engine like Google.

The idea over here is not to advertise yourself as a person who is in search of a life partner. No matter how well you put it, it loses that touch of subtlety once you are in a singles' chat room. So don't do it that way. You remember how we spoke about working backwards; this is how it is done.

We will tell you how to project yourself best in a later chapter but for now let us talk about finding Mr. Right or Ms. Right. An interesting thing to be noted here is that it is not difficult to fall in love with a person or to make a choice. The difficult part is to make the right choice and to fall in love with the right person.

Likes Vs Dislikes

The second thing that you could do is chalk out a list of qualities that you genuinely dislike in a person. Yes I am not joking! Dislikes are just as important, or even more important than likes. We all have to make compromises here and there, but if we start away by condoning things, which we genuinely dislike, it is going to tell on the relationship at sometime or the other.

I would like to give a word of caution over here. A lot of people make a mistake when they are courting. They put up their best behavior, which is very good of course, but they try to be very adjusting and accommodating which is NOT very good. A point that they tend to over look is that they are not going to be going on a camping trip with this person that they are trying to impress; they are going to be living the rest of their lives with the person.

So it is best not to be very "oh so very accommodating and adjusting."

You can afford to stick to things that you are very particular about. And if you have any thoughts that you will be able to mold the person out of his or her offending habits at a later date, forget it.

The moment you start trying to mold or cajole the person out of his or her habits, whatever they may be, the word becomes 'nagging' and if at all the person does drop the habit, he or she will love you less for it.

It really doesn't work that way. So it's best to have a clear idea about qualities and habits that you genuinely dislike in a person and steer clear of the 'lesser mortals' who have those habits.

Once you have a fairly clear idea about your likes and dislikes you are in a better position to make the right choice. And considering the multitude of people out there, you do not have to worry or be over anxious that you just might not find any one at all. He or she is out there, and if you are doing what you are doing right, namely barking up the right tree you will succeed.

There are some people who even believe that every thing is ordained. It has been written down who should marry who and in the end only that which should happen will happen. Well, I don't know about that, but I do know that dating helps speed up the process.

Another thing that you could do is that you could just let nature take its course. Oh nature has its wonderful ways. There is a lot of chemistry involved in the selection of partner so maybe the best thing we could do is lend nature a helping hand.

Friends First

Try to look at this endeavor not as a prospective husband/wife hunt but as an effort to make a lot of friends, and I mean good friends. Friends that you can laugh aloud with, friends who make you laugh. Not everyone can make us laugh, and when I say laugh, I am not referring to some comedian. We are talking about friends here.

It really does pay to have a lot of friends. It makes ones life richer. The best thing about friends is that you can be yourself with them. And they too can be themselves with you. And that means letting it all out. We must remember that apart from being the dutiful husband or wife, your spouse should be your best friend as well.

That is one mistake that most couples make. They tend to look upon their friends and their spouses as separate. While it is perfectly ok to have your own friends, your best friend should always be your husband or wife.

It should be someone you can share your dreams and fears with, someone who understands, someone who can give your hand a gentle squeeze when things go wrong and someone who can brighten up your darkest day.



All this is a very far cry from sex right? That is why we did mention earlier that looks and sex should be

the last criteria in the selection of a life partner. The marriage proposal must come as a natural sequence and it should by no means be the first thing that comes out as soon as you warm up to a person. You cannot very well say something like, "hey, you know what, I think we have the same tastes so let's get married."

You can say that of course but it would not be in very good taste. So what do you do if you discover that one of the friends that you made and the one who you were keeping your fingers crossed about is already married?

Do you have a car? Then the answer is simple, just run over that person's spouse and remove the unwanted element, right? Wrong! It is just not done. You can still be friends with that person and shift your attention towards another direction. Who knows, you might even find a better person. All you have to do is shuffle your cards and deal them out again.

I hope you have got the hang of what we meant by working backwards now? Good. There is another catch involved in this process. There is a chance that one of the friends that you made may have read this book too and maybe the proposal may come from the other end.

If it does, then well and good; for it saves you the ritual.

Mr. Right and Ms. Wrong

But then, what if the person who proposes to you wasn't really what you had in mind? Well, the choice is yours of course; you can take it or leave it. But there is a point worth considering over here. If we can find someone that we love that is good, but if we find some one who loves us, isn't that better?

But I would also like to add a word over here. Suppose some one does come and propose to you but unfortunately, you are not in the least interested? You have every right to turn the proposal down but please do it gracefully. There is no need to hurt the other person's ego. This person is obviously a friend of yours, and surely you care deeply for them. However, if you know that you cannot marry this person, a turned-down proposal is better than a divorce.

Try to explain your feelings in the gentlest way possible.

Step 2: Making Yourself Look Like A Million Dollars

Nobody is perfect in this world but that does not mean that we cannot try to look our best. There is absolutely nothing wrong in giving nature a helping hand. Work on your image, work on your profile, and work on your appearance.

Many people go by the philosophy, "this is me, whether you like it or not it's your problem. I am not going to change." Well, nobody is asking you to change, but what are you trying to do? Scare people off?

Well, the fact is, such statements are just a manifestation of your own insecurity. We all have a certain degree of insecurity, some people more than others. It is this insecurity that makes us sound gruff and uncaring when it comes to improving our appearances.

Come on, what are you afraid of? I'll give you a tip. Whatever you are afraid of, others are afraid of the same thing. In this world, most people are neither for us nor against us. They are thinking about themselves.

Presenting oneself is an area that requires a lot of work, but surprisingly, this is the one area which people tend to neglect the most. Most of us have a laid back attitude when it comes to painting a picture about ourselves. When it comes to presenting yourself we really have some work to do.

If we knew you on a more personal basis we would have loved to help you to chalk out a profile of your self that would be as impressive as possible. But of course, it is impossible to know all our readers on a one to one basis.

But you do not have to worry because we have done a lot of study in this regard and once you follow our directions, you can indeed come up with that dream profile.

The Dream Profile



One cannot take too much effort in preparing a profile. It is something that should be viewed in all seriousness. Please do not treat the subject lightly. Imagine that you are preparing for a job; won't you spend a lot of time getting your resume ready?

Well, most of us take up jobs for how long, four or five years? And how about a relationship, definitely we do not embark on a relationship with the expectation that it would last for just a couple of years.

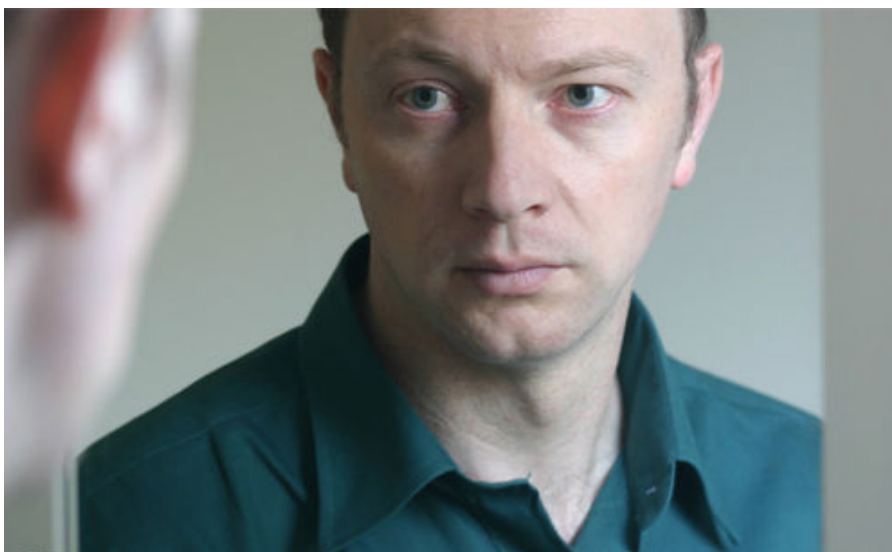
We have to understand that a relationship is really worth much more than a job, because it is probably the most important decision in your life. So now let us discuss ways in which you can spruce up your profile.

You can of course get a professional to do the job for you since it saves you the effort. You may have to dish out a small amount of course, but it could be worth it. There are many people who have qualms about including a picture in the profile. Well, I don't want to press the issue. It certainly does look better to have a picture in your profile, but due to privacy issues you can refrain from including a picture.

The best thing you could do is once you are comfortable chatting with a person and are convinced that this person does not have any devious intentions, you could send your picture over as an attachment or a file. But this, too, is best done a mutual exchange basis. It would be unfair if you know what the other person looks like but the other person is kept in the dark and vice versa.

The Face in the Mirror

Now, coming to the picture as such, if you are sending over a picture of yourself, for heavens sake, send over a decent picture. It should be a recent one and please do not make any compromises about the quality. Get a professional to do the job for you and with the digital techniques of today, they can do a very impressive job.



At the same time do work on your expression before the photograph is taken. Stand in front of your mirror and try out various expressions till you get something that you think is the best for you. And remember that it has to be a picture of you smiling. You should not have the classic hang dog expression, or the "butter-will-not-melt-in-my-mouth expression". Smile, it costs you nothing and it really lights up a person's face.

Now, the first thing that you should do is take out a pencil and paper and write down the raw details about yourself. By raw details we are referring to things like you age, your height and your weight.

This is the skeleton of which we are going to work on. And when we have added enough flesh and blood to this backbone, why even you will be impressed by your profile! But first let us steer clear of certain pit falls into which most people fall.

The Modesty Pitfall

Most of us have been trained to be very modest. When it comes to saying something good about our selves we feel very queasy about blowing our own trumpet. Right, no body is asking you to do any trumpet blowing but facts have to be stated as facts.

If you are a music lover and have a good voice too, I can't see why you can't put it down like that itself. Why can't you declare simply without sounding very proud that you have good voice? A pointer that you could bear in mind would be to add something like, "My friends think that I sing rather well."

There now, you can't feel too bad about something as simple as that. It is as good as saying "some people think that I sing well, but it is for you to decide whether I have a good voice or not." Similar statements that you can work on and even add are given below.

- "Lots of people appreciate my cooking."

- "I am no Rembrandt, but I enjoy painting."
- "I like decorating, and many of my friends think that my tastes are not too bad."

So go ahead, if you really have a talent, you might as well as let others know about it, after all a talented person would any way like to be appreciated by a partner.

While we are talking about modesty, there is one question that I want to address right now. It is something that all of us are familiar with. If you have chatted with a stranger with whom you are trying to build a rapport you must have been confronted with the question before. The question is "what do you look like?"

I have often wondered about the sense of this question. The best answers that I could come up with are "I look like a cross between an orangutan and a Tasmanian devil" or "I have my mother's teeth, my father's nose, my uncle's eyes and my roommates' shoes."

But of course we cannot give such answers which funny though they might sound, might just rub the person in the wrong way. What the person actually means is, "are you good looking or not?"

A very tricky question indeed! How can you answer such a question with out sounding either super modest or extremely vain? The answer to that is not to tell them the answer directly. You can say something like:

- "I am as fresh as peppermint."
- "I look like a bunch of fresh lilies."
- "I have the appeal of a bowl of fresh fruit."

If the person still does not take the hint, then give them a detailed description of ever inch and let he or she decide for himself or herself.

The Braggart Pitfall

Bragging, as we all know, is a major turnoff. So it is best to steer completely clear of it. This is especially true in the case of physical attributes. You might be one hell of a looker, but let the other person decide, remember that what wine is for Peter can turn of to be venom for Paul.

You can make implied statements like, "I am certainly not a bad looker," or "opinion is divided, some people think that I am good looking while others think that I am not." But perhaps the best way of describing yourself would be to add a touch of humor to it.

If you are chubby you could say something like, "I am round in all the right places...I hope." If you are tall you could say something like, "some say I should play basketball." If you are on the short side you could say something like, "I might seem to lacking in size but I assure you, it is all there."



You know what is the best part about such witty remarks about oneself? Humor always works. All of us have been blessed with a sense of humor to some degree at least and if a person is able to make funny comments about himself or herself, that always acts as a turn on. And you can take my word for it; humor sells like a billion dollars.

The Hackneyed Pitfall



We have seen and heard other people describe themselves and these kind of descriptions sort of sink into our heads. The moment some one asks us to describe ourselves, we start off by using such hackneyed phrases.

I think it is much better to completely steer clear of hackneyed phrases. It makes us look like just another face in the crowd. Tell me, unless you have an identical twin, have you ever seen any one who looks exactly like you?

Then why on earth should your description of yourself sound like a banal organ that has been played again and again. Try to sound as original as you can. Make yourself sound interesting.

Try to use as many similes and comparisons as possible. If you are blonde, well don't just say that you are blonde. You could descriptions like, "My hair is the color of freshly harvested hay."

If you are a brunette you could say something like:

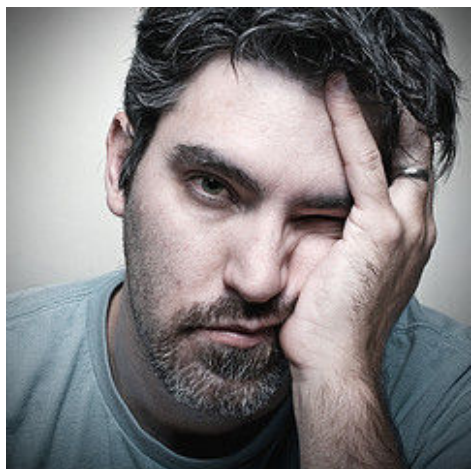
"My hair color would make a raven blush." If you have red hair, you could try something like, "My hair is like the setting sun."

Another point that I would like to add is you do not have to belittle yourself. Every coin has two sides and it all depends on the way you look at it. For example, if you have dark skin, there is absolutely no reason to feel bad about it. It all depends on how you put it across. You could try expressions like, "If you like chocolate then you are going to love the color of my skin." Or "My body looks like polished wood."

Remember, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, and it is left to you to convince the beholder. Most people are willing to believe what you tell them, provided you tell them convincingly enough.

The Boredom Pitfall

Try to make yourself sound as interesting as possible. I mean it. If you are painting a self portrait you might as well use the right colors. Before we leave our homes what do we do? We all spend at least five minutes in front of our mirrors in an attempt to make our selves look as presentable and as impressive as possible.



Well, the same thing applies to our profile. Remove all drab details about yourself that might be of no interest to the reader. If your job is something like editing journals on the etymology of words derived from ancient Aramaic, well, just say that you have an editing job.

Similarly try to bear in mind that anything can be put down in two ways. You can either make it interesting or boring; so work on it until you are sure that it will not bore a reader to death and the best test for this would be to hand it over to a close friend and ask that friend's opinion. Nobody likes a bore so take all efforts not to sound like one.

The Vagueness Pitfall

At the same time whatever you put down about yourself must not be confusing. It just does not work to put down a statement like, "while I am not really given to sports, nor am I considered to be an outdoor person, I have developed a passing interest in watching football, and have had my stints with Terra firma."

Phew! If anything drives people away, statements like this certainly do. For Heaven's sake avoid phrases like "I am different," especially when you are talking about your appearance. The other person will in all likelihood conjure up images of a three horned monster or a lion tailed monkey.

Another example is when you use phrases like, "I don't play by the rules," or "I am game for something new." These expressions can be hopelessly misleading and it is the easiest thing in the world to add a sexual innuendo to such an expression and that would be a sure shot method of biting off more than you can chew.

Now that we have discussed the major pitfalls, let us go to the real profile. The reason I said real profile is that the profile must indeed reflect the person you are.

The Web of Deceit

While you might take some care to conceal your identity it is best not to lie.

Do not try to bluff your way through a relationship because at sometime the whole thing might come out and as we all know, one lie leads to another and then before you know it the whole relationship will crash. Be as honest and as frank as you can, taking care to conceal your identity.

Some one once said that a friend is some one who knows all about you and loves you just the same. So there is no need to hide things about you. Of course you do not have to tell the person every ghastly, gory detail about yourself, but at the same time you do not have to conjure up stuff about you that just is not true.

If at all you do paint a very rosy picture about yourself, including things that just are not true, or are far-

fetched exaggerations, and the other person does flip for you, in reality you will be basking in another person's glory. This picture you have painted is just not you.

Your Alter Ego

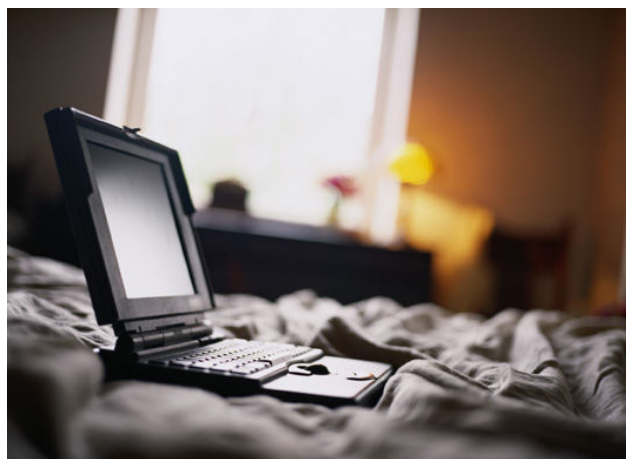
When you choose a handle to identify yourself by, you have to be sharp. Do not try to attract as many partners as possible. After all, what are we looking for, quality or quantity? Try to attract only the kind of people you are interested in and who would find you interesting.

That is why we suggested that you use a handle that better defines the kind of person you are. Do not try to sound like a sex god or a sex goddess. If you are, let the other person decide for him self or her self; (it is much better than having the person come up with statements like "is it in yet?") So steer clear of handles like Megastud, Handsomehunk, Superbabe or Bedlover.

Instead of that you could try handles that gives one an immediate idea about the kind of person you are. If you are an outdoor person use something like Natureguy or Naturegirl; if you are a music freak use something like Musicman or Musicmaid. If you are into theatre and stuff like that you could choose a name like Theatreguy or Theatregirl.

The point is to win over people who are interested in the same stuff as you are. That of course increases your chances of gelling with the person.

Brevity is Key



Another crucial thing about writing your profile is that you should keep it as brief as possible. Nobody and that means nobody wants to read through lines and lines of another person's profile. If you make it so long winded the person who is reading it will get the idea that you are the kind of person who would love to keep on talking about yourself and instead of go on a date with you, the reader would rather curl up and die.

But that doesn't mean that you have to limit the whole thing to just a few words. A too brief profile would sound as if you do not have time for all this,

but you are just doing it for the heck of it.

The best style that you could use would be to be 100% natural. Write your profile as you would describe yourself to a person directly. The conversation style has the widest appeal I might add. Make it simple and stay away from big words and hackneyed expressions.

You are Unique

Think about it for a minute. Look at yourself in the mirror. Do you look like anyone else that you know? We all look so different though essentially we have been endowed with the same external

characteristics, which are one nose, one mouth, two eyes and two ears.

So in spite of having the same building blocks, if we can look so different why do we have to sound alike? Think about yourself in a different way. Do not just consider your likes and dislikes when you are writing your profile, consider your endearing qualities as well. Endearing qualities, what are those?

Those are those qualities which make you liked by others. Of course, these are things that we never bother, about but maybe we should. So what I would suggest would be to ask your best friends why they like you. Who knows, their answers just might surprise you! But at least you will get an idea of what you can include in your profile.

You could try out the following exercise to find out what kind of a person you are. I won't say that the results are absolutely fool proof but they certainly might be interesting.

The Animal Test

Which among the following animals do you identify with most?

- A shark
- A rabbit
- A bear
- A hen
- A dog and finally
- A cat
- If you chose a shark, you are generally an aggressive kind of person who has no time for others who are not up to the mark. You won't think twice about slicing through those who stand in your way and you have a very clear idea about what you want and you know how to get it too.
- If you chose a rabbit you are generally sweet tempered but timid. You bend very easily. You like to stay clear from the limelight as far as possible and do not interfere much in the affairs of others.
- If you chose the bear, you are a warm person by nature but not very sure about whether others like you. Hence you might go out of your way to win friends and love reassuring others.
- If you chose the hen, then you are one of those people who constantly fuss about minor details. You keep your eyes open but you are very dependable though sometimes you might end up poking your nose into things that do not concern you.
- If you chose the dog you are a happy go lucky person. You are willing to help others but if you do not watch out, more than once you might be taken for a ride. You do not bother about trifles but when you lose your head, it is really lost.
- Hmm, you chose the cat did you? Well you live in a world of your own; you do not trouble others and do not like others troubling you. In short you are very much the modern apartment creature who knows all the manners but uses them only to be civil.



Now, the descriptions given here are just general guidelines but I suppose that it does give you a cue about how to write your own profile. You can do it by yourself. Think about the animal or bird that you like best. Do not consider physical attributes but think of traits or characteristics that you like.

Then you can sit down and write a brief description about the animal and hey presto! Before you even know it, your profile is ready but it would be a good idea to delete the name of the animal when you post your profile.

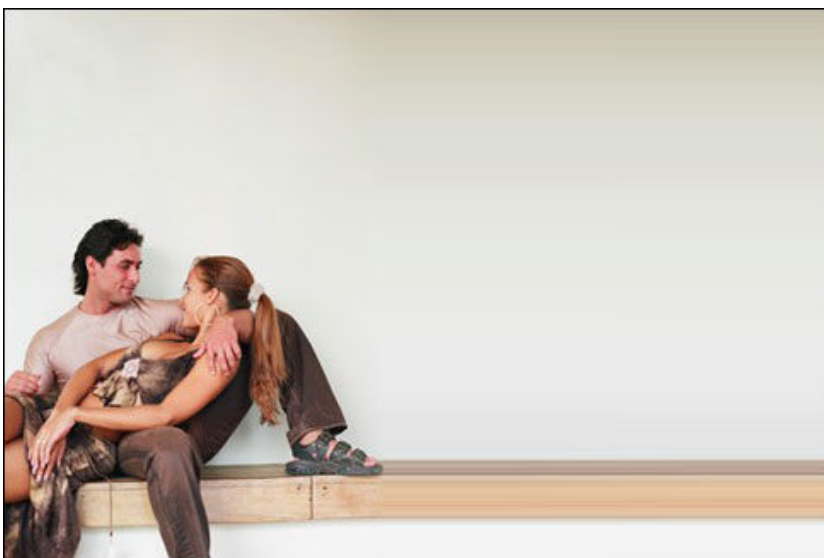
There is something that I want all my readers to understand. Each one of us has something remarkable about us. It is all a question of finding out what those qualities are. Do not always believe what other people have to say about you. Don't you have something to say about yourself?

Pretend as if you were talking to your best friend. Talk to yourself. If your best friend were to ask you what his or her endearing qualities are then wouldn't you be quick to reassure the person? Well, the same thing applies to you as well. You can be your own best friend. And when you try out this exercise on yourself, well, you have a list of your plus points ready. Common if you can do this to your friend, then you can do it to yourself as well.

Such an exercise is very useful not just from the dating point of view but only if we understand what are our positive traits are, can we understand what kind of a person we deserve to get. The same holds true about our negative traits too, but then nobody is perfect.

Step 3: Letting the Relationship Blossom

Right, so now we are as ready as we can be with our interests all chalked out and our profiles posted. It is perfect picture. It is almost like being seated alone at this posh restaurant, dressed to kill, with a glass of champagne in one hand and the other hand swung over the back of the chair. You have a smile on your lips, a twinkle in your eye and an invitation on your face.



So what happens next? This person who appears to be the perfect match for you catches your eye and saunters towards you. Now what do you do? Please remember that the description above was pertaining to a virtual environment. In effect, what we meant is that while you spend time idling in a chat room, this is the mood that you are going to generate.

So what happens when a person takes the cue and starts chatting? Well, that really is an intelligent question. I would like to make one thing straight over here. The Internet is like any other highway. It is not safe until you get to know your way around. So what I would suggest would be to trust your

instincts and proceed with caution. You can sound like a very warm person but please be extremely cautious about giving out any personal information.

Nicknames and Pet names

Let the other person know that you would prefer to be known by the handle you use or even better, you could tell the person to call you a pet name but let the person know that it is indeed a pet name, because at a later date, if the relationship really blossoms it doesn't look nice if you have to say something like, "Gee, I'm sorry, but my name isn't really Janice, it is Heptullah, I guess I lied to you."

The best thing in this case would be to let your self be known by the name of some celebrity. You could call yourself Cinderella or Pocahontas or Archie, or Betty or Veronica. The chatting has now begun and you can start exchanging information. Keep to the general and stay away from the specific.

Helping your Memory

The human brain is indeed a remarkable thing. It is capable of storing and processing such a wide range of information that even a supercomputer would shy away when compared to it. But due to the virtual explosion of information, our memories have become very selective.

This means that we cannot recollect everything that we hear or see. Do not trust your memory too much when it comes to chatting over the net. You might meet a lot of people over the net and you might chat with a couple of them. So eventually it might become difficult to remember all of them and their details as well.

Or even worse than that is that you might become confused and mix up details. It would look bad for you if you call a person the wrong name, or ask the person the wrong details. In such cases where you have been chatting with a number of persons, for heaven's sake jot down the details about each person separately or create separate files for each person and store them in your computer.

When you add them to your friends list use handles or nicknames that can help you remember the person the moment you start chatting at a later date.

Now, in case you do not really remember the person, then it is unadvisable to play the guessing game. The other person might get very offended if you say something like, "Is it Sarah or Mary?"

In such cases when you have a genuine lapse of memory, the best thing to do is to be honest with the person and say, "I know we chatted the other day, but I'm terribly sorry, can you please refresh my memory about you?"

Small Talk

There are few topics that are best for the initial talks so that an intimacy is not developed and at the same time you do not have to struggle for matters of common interest. You can talk about the weather, sports, movies, music and even food.

But at the same it is in bad taste to discuss religion, politics and family matters in the initial

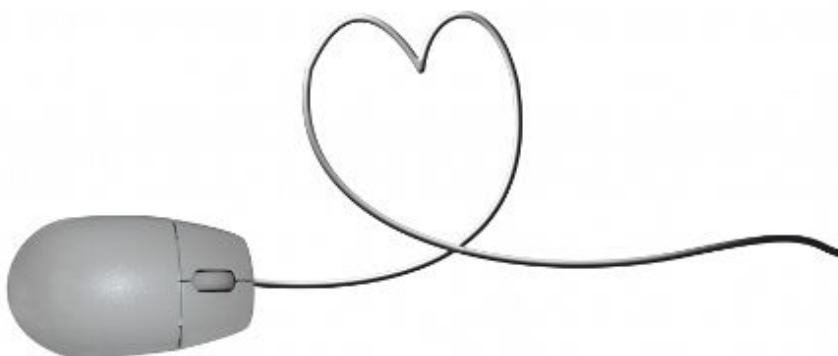
stages. You can crack jokes but dirty jokes are an absolute no-no at least in the first few talks.

Once you have talked more than once or twice and you feel comfortable with the person you can give the person your e-mail address but remember this is the first step towards virtual intimacy so you have to trust your instincts and nothing else. This takes things out of the public chat rooms and into the private inboxes.

Beware of Instant Intimacy

There are many people who feel that e-mail will never have the warmth or the personal touch of the old-fashioned letters and cards that people used to send through the postal service. That may be true but e-mail has an advantage of the here and the now.

Because you are aware of the fact that the person you are chatting is reaching out to you in the same way as you are reaching out to that person, there is a tendency for an intimacy to build up even before you know it.



The medium ceases to be the deciding factor and when a person presses you for information which you have to supply immediately you might let certain details slip out unless you are well prepared.

You have to be on your guard all the time and keep constantly reminding your self that the person you are chatting with is, after all a stranger and a goodness-knows-what. The best thing that you could do is avoid instant intimacy altogether.

It doesn't really matter if the other person finds you cold or reserved, you can easily solve that by telling the other person that it takes sometime for you to become comfortable with a person. That in fact is a good quality because it is as good as saying, "Well, I'm sorry I'm not the loose kind who plays around."

There is something that many of my readers might want to know and that is how to find out if the other person is lying. As I had told you earlier, the Net can be a very unsafe place and so we have to be absolutely sure about the good faith of the other person before revealing any personal details about ourselves. So the next part has been devoted specifically for that.

4. Ways to Tell If Someone Is Lying

1. As discussed earlier, we are not going to resort to singles' chat rooms dedicated specifically to online dating. Instead we will be in chat rooms of specific interest. So one very effective way of finding out if a person is lying would be to ask the person very pointed questions about the area of interest. If the person fumbles or gives vague answers then you do not have to waste your time on such a person.

2. Another thing that you could do is that from the moment you first make contact, jot down whatever details the person chooses to reveal to you and in subsequent encounters nonchalantly question the person about the details, if there is a contradiction in the two details then you can be as sure as pat that the person is lying.

3. Ask the person seemingly general questions but which in fact should have a very definite purpose, for example ask the person what he or she is looking for in such a relationship. Note down the answer. After two or three encounters again repeat the question and see whether the two answers match.

4. You could try pretending that you have chatted with the person before and innocently ask the person if he or she is such and such person (make something up) and try offering compliments to the person like, "I really enjoyed chatting with you the other day. You were perfectly charming..." and so on. If the person falls for cheap flattery like this, then obviously he or she makes it a hobby to chat with people under various identities.

And so the chatting goes on until the person really grows on you. When you feel that you can really trust the person, you may try giving the person your telephone number. Remember that this too is a giant leap towards building a relationship so it's better that you be sure than sorry.

The safest thing you can do about telephone numbers is to mutually exchange it preferably at the same time, so that neither party is at a disadvantage. It's really no big deal, you can afford to tell the person that you are just being wary, the person will understand. If he or she does not, then there is a good chance that he or she will not understand a lot of other things as well. In that case, dump the person.



Step 4: Meeting Face To Face

Once you have started talking over the telephone, then the relationship has already taken wings, then is no reason to postpone a direct meeting. So what are we waiting for? But wait; there is no need to push it. You should not sound over anxious to meet this girl or guy.

Let the decision to meet evolve over a number of telephone calls. And there are certain things that you can bear in mind before you really meet.

The Rendezvous

It is not advisable to invite someone home before you have really met the person. You had better choose a public place preferably somewhere where there are plenty of people around, just in case, you know.

That is why most couples prefer to meet in a restaurant over lunch or dinner. There is one thing about having food together. When people sit together and have food together they get to know a lot about each other.

Table manners tell us a lot about a person's upbringing and background and you can learn a lot about a person by observing him or her eat. The second thing is that warm food has a wonderful effect on the human mind. It releases all those digestive juices and sets the tongue wagging. People loosen up a lot, especially after a glass of wine or two.



The first mistake that most people make is that they go under the wrong impression that a meeting, even the first meeting must end up in bed. No, it does not have to be so.

There is no compulsion on your part or anyone's part that you have to take the person home with you. Just because you enjoy talking or chatting with a person it does not necessarily mean that you have to sleep with the person. Let that too evolve, so it is best to keep any such situations that might lead to a bed room scene completely at bay.

So how do you do that? The first thing you should do is that you should be clear about the time. Evenings are tricky times to meet. If you have dinner together, then there comes the possibility of dropping the other person home.

And of course you can't just accept a ride and walk away after being dropped without inviting the other person in. And then one thing will lead to the other and then the inevitable is bound to happen. Of course, if that's the way you would like it to be then you just have to do what I just told you not to do.

Lunch time is the best time because in the day time most of us are busy with work and we can just spare an hour or a half for lunch. So you can always leave on the pretext that you have to get back to work or something like that. Very few people end up going home together after lunch. Another thing is that at lunch the element of romance does not really come in.

Take care to be at the arranged spot on time, you certainly do not want to keep a person you are meeting for the first time waiting. Dress appropriately for the occasion, keep it simple but at the same time it should be something that looks good on you.

Leaving Your Mark Behind



Now, suppose this date did work out as planned and you really and thoroughly enjoyed the company of the other person you would want the other person to remember you and think about you, wouldn't you? So how do you make sure that the other person does think about you?

The answer is simple. Just leave your mark behind. Mind you, a business or visiting card is not appropriate here. It lends a very formal color to the picture. Surely you do not want

the person to remember you for your credentials or your designation. Something more personalized would be more appropriate.

Put your artistic and creative talents into full gear. If you are poetic, you could pen down a few lines on a small card and hand it to the person. Mind you, the lines should not be about the person, but about general topics like friendship, relationships, togetherness, warmth, or meetings. But do the writing in advance and keep it for the right moment. Do not try to write a poem on a paper napkin with the person sitting in front of you!

If you can't write poetry, maybe you could get some dried flowers and stick them onto a card and copy down the lines of somebody else, but admit that the lines are not your to the person.

Keep such a token with you and wait for the right moment. Just before you part, if you are sure that "this is the one" then hand it over to the person with a very shy expression on your face and a timid, "I made this for you..." Believe me, it's a lot better to say "I made this for you" than "I bought this for you".

So what happens if you are not too sure that you want to see this person again? Well keep it with you itself and save it for the next person.

If the person is the right person, and if you did hand the person this personalized token, the person is sure to think of you in a much fonder way.

Clothes Maketh a Man (Or Woman)



You do not have to be dressed to kill when you go out to lunch. The best thing about lunch dates is that most of would be in our work clothes and that saves us the agony of choosing the right thing to wear on a first date.

A wonderful thing that you could do when going on a fist date is to make it a group activity, preferably a foursome. This takes away the awkwardness of the situation and definitely takes away all those embarrassing moments of silence.

A group has another advantage in that lesser attention will be focused on each other so that there is less stress and as a result both partners would be more relaxed. It is also safer too, since there is safety in numbers.

But the company to be included should be mutually agreeable and not be thrust upon the other person. But

take care to avoid any person who you know to be a chatterbox; it takes all the fun away if one person dominates the conversation.

You may drink if you want to, but do not drink too much on your first date. Not only is it in bad taste but when you are drunk, you might blurt out something which you didn't mean to and that might ruin every thing.

Footing the Bill

It is a good idea to decide before hand and communicate your decision to go Dutch, which means that each person should pay for whatever he or she has. That's the way that it is supposed to be because if nothing works out of this relation you certainly do not want to be obliged to the person.

When you choose the place, avoid secluded spots and places that you are not familiar with. But the ambience is indeed important. You cannot expect to have a tête-à-tête in a crowded shopping mall, can you? I think that is about it about your first date.

Many Dates

So what happens if you get more than one offer to date at more or less the same time? Or in other words, what happens if you become close to more than one person at a time? Hey, that is probably the very thing we are looking out for. You could go on different dates and then compare for your self and choose the best person.

You do not have to leap for the first person who caught your fancy. You have the right to choose, so go ahead and do it. There is no need to feel guilty about two timing any body as long as you do not promise any one that you are not seeing any one else.



And what happens if you bump into date number one while you are out with date number 2. Well, all you have to do is treat it as the most natural thing in the world. Introduce date No.1 to date No.2 as your friends and watch how they behave. This is an excellent way of finding out how a jealous husband or wife may behave in future.

But what ever happens, a double date, that is going out with two people together is completely out of the question!

Offline Dating: How to Make That Great Impression

When you are dating online, you have a lot of things to your advantage. For example, the other person does not really see you and you do not really have to bother about appearances. You can devote your entire energy towards sounding intelligent and witty.

But when you are actually seated in front of a person, there are a thousand things that you have to pay attention to. There are many people who believe that it is not really important to keep up appearances. They feel that it is more important to be oneself.

It sounds good enough. But on your first date at least you certainly have to keep up appearances. The other person should not feel ashamed to be seen around with you and so you should try as hard as possible to avoid that faux pas.

Let us start with your physical appearance. While I did mention earlier that you do not have to be dressed to kill, it is very important that you have to appear well groomed. Take special care about things like nails, hair, and teeth. Check for bad breath too because that indeed is the worst turn off.

What you wear should not be loud and attract the wrong kind of attention. Choose something that you are comfortable in and at the same time that looks good on you. Ladies, please be careful about your make-up, and remember that make-up is meant to accentuate your looks not to hide it. It is best to avoid garish colors.

You should smell good of course but don't over do it. We certainly don't want you to remain in the other person's memory as just one strong smell. Men, please take care to go in for masculine scents like musk, or smells from nature. Women, keep it as light and dainty as possible.

The Secret is Charm



All the things that have been said so far are about how you can create a favorable impression. There is something that is equally or even more important than that, and that is to make the other person feel comfortable. Help the other person relax.

Any way you have been chatting for quite some time so you do know a great deal about each other. The best thing you can do is to ease the tension and break the ice. Sometimes the ice gets so thick that you can literally feel it. Break it up by cracking a joke or two.

But the joke should be spontaneous and in keeping with the situation or else it will fall flat. Do not rehearse a joke because a rehearsed joke sounds...well...rehearsed.

The key word here is charm. Use all the charm that you can muster. Try to be as considerate and as thoughtful as possible. Do not dominate the conversation but try to get the other person talking. People generally love to talk about themselves so try to get the other person talking by asking about the person's work.

Show interest in whatever the other person says.

Try to be a good conversationalist. A good conversationalist is not a person who talks well, but is one who listens well as well. So try to be a good listener. And while you are listening try not to get distracted by something else or the other person might feel that you are losing interest in what he or she is saying.

Then comes the question, "what do you do if you find that the other person is dominating the conversation?"

Well, in that case listen patiently for a minute or two and then give a subtle sign like a raised eyebrow or a smile through the corner of your mouth. If the other person is intelligent enough, he or she will get the cue. If not, then take your chance, you might have to listen to this person for the rest of your life.

Humor rarely fails. But again take care not to over do it. There is only one thing worse than a total lack of humor and that is too much humor.

Gifts?



It is a good idea to take a gift along with you as that does create a good impression, but remember that when you are courting the gifts should be limited to flowers or chocolates only. While you are chatting try to find out what the other person likes in flowers and chocolates. You certainly don't want to give the person flowers that he or she is allergic to.

The object of your gift should not be to woo the person but to create a good and lasting impression. There is no sense in splurging a lot on your first date for there is no rule that every thing should work out well the first time itself. Do not over do it and at the same time do not appear cheap and stingy either.

However if the other person has forgotten to bring you a gift, be quick to reassure the person that it is perfectly alright. Do not let the other person feel uneasy. In fact, that is a wonderful way to make the conversation light. You can jokingly tell the other person to get you a gift the next time.

Step 5: Once Bitten...

Many of my readers might be worried that everything does not work out like has been described, what would they do? Or in other words if this first date does not work out what should they do?

The answer is very simple, repeat the whole process again!

Let's go back to where we started. Remember, this is a chance to find the partner for life so we might have to grow many plants before we get the right harvest.

I am not talking about two timing here. What I mean is that instead of putting all your eggs in one basket, keep the avenues open. Don't just bank on one person, because if that doesn't work out, you might lose heart. You can hope for the best but expect the contrary as well.

Only the every lucky ones get the right pick at the first go it self. For the rest of us, we just have to keep trying till we succeed. Another advantage of trying out different people is that you can get to choose. It should not be that you just flipped for the first guy or girl who came your way. Take you time, give yourself some breathing space and then make the right decision.

Nobody can force you into making a commitment. It should be completely your choice. Of course, if you get the right cues and something deep down inside tells you that this is the right person for you, then what are you waiting for, go ahead and show the green signal.

But on the other hand if someone is trying to force you into making a commitment and you feel hard pressed, gently try to break away. All you have to do is put your foot down very firmly and tell the person that you need more time.

However, it is not good to keep a person waiting indefinitely. Tell the person that you need perhaps a week's time or more than that. But don't let the person realize that you are checking out other people. Just tell them that this is probably the most important decision in your life so you just want to be sure.

In Closing...



I would like to add one word about signing off. In case things do not work out please take care to part gracefully. In such instances it is not the best decision to say such things over chat. The other person may put forward some very uncomfortable questions that you will have a tough time answering.

The best thing you could do is send the person an e-mail telling him or her that he or she was not really what you had in mind, but you would like to remain good friends all the same.

You do not have to worry about being pestered by the other person in future; the

"good friends" part never fails. Most people dislike to be called a good friend after a close encounter. In most cases the relationship just sizzles out after this. However please remember that it is indeed bad manners to part with out a word and just stop answering mails without any information at all.

Some people do that because they do not want to offend the other person. But such callousness is really worse.

So that is all about it. You know everything that is to be known and the ball is now well and truly in your courts. So what are you waiting for, why don't you go out there and make your presence felt and come back with the catch of a lifetime.

I don't think that we have left any stones unturned and from here I'm sure that on your first date everything will be well in your control.

To your first dating success online!



Part 3

Social Networking Exposed!

What is Social Networking?



We have all likely heard of Social Networking before, but not everyone knows what it means? If you were asked to define what social networking was, would you be able to give an accurate definition? Unfortunately, most individuals cannot, even though it is likely that they participate in some form of social networking, especially online.

Social networking is defined as the grouping of individuals together into to specific groups, often like a small community or a neighborhood. Although social networking is

possible in person, especially in schools or in the workplace, it is most popular online. This is because unlike most high schools, colleges, or workplaces, the Internet is filled with millions, if not more, of individuals who are looking to meet other Internet users and develop friendships.

When it comes to social networking online, websites are used. These websites are known as social networking websites. Social networking websites are, in a way, like an online community of Internet users. Depending on the social networking website in question, many of these online community members share a common bond, whether that bond be hobbies, religion, or politics. Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialize. This socialization may include reading the profiles or profile pages of other members or even contacting them.

The friends that you can make are just one of the many benefits to social networking online. Another one of those benefits includes diversity. Unlike in most schools or workplaces, the Internet gives individuals, from all around the world, access to social networking sties. This means that although you are in the United States, you could develop an online friendship with someone in Japan. Not only will you make a new friend, you but may also learn a thing or two about a new culture.

As previously mentioned, social networking often involves grouping specific individuals or organizations together. While there are a number of social networking websites that focus on particular Internets, there are others that do not. These websites are often deemed traditional social networking websites. These types of websites typically have an open membership. This means that anyone can become a member, no matter what their hobbies, beliefs, or views are. However, once you are inside this online community, you can begin to create your own network of friends; thus eliminating others that do not meet your criteria.

If networking on the Internet sounds like something you would be interested in, you are encouraged to learn more about it, such as the dangers of social networking. These dangers often involve online predators or individuals who claim to be someone that they are not. Although danger does exist with networking online, it also exists with networking out in the real world. As when you are meeting friends at a bar, school, or work, you are advised to proceed with caution online. By being aware of your surroundings and who you are talking to, you should be able safely enjoying social networking online.

Once you have learned everything that you feel you need to learn, about social networking online, you can begin to search for networking communities to join.

This can easily be done by performing a standard Internet search. Your search will likely return a number of results, including MySpace, FriendWise, FriendFinder, Yahoo! 360, Facebook, Orkut, Friendster, and Classmates.

Why Social Networking Sites are So Popular

Social networking websites, over the past few years, have rapidly increased in popularity, so much that many are wondering why.

If you have used a social networking website before, it is likely that you are already fully aware of their popularity and the reason for popularity. There is just something about these websites that draw in millions of Internet users. With a wide variety of different social networking websites available, there are a wide variety of different reasons for their popularity. One those reasons being the ease of use.

Social networking websites are, for the most part, easy to use. Most sites are easy to navigate. In fact, many require little knowledge of the Internet. In addition to being easy to navigate, social networking websites also make it easier to meet new people online. There are many Internet users who would love to make new friends online; however, that can sometimes be difficult do.



Without social networking websites, you would have to connect with Internet users, often in chat rooms, and learn about their interests before deciding if you would like to consider them your "buddy." Social networking sites allow you to learn information about another Internet user before ever having to make contact with them.

Another one of the many reasons why social networking sites are popular is because many are free to use. In fact, the majority of social networking sites, such as MySpace and Yahoo! 360, are free to use.

Despite being free to use, many websites require that you register with them. This registration will not only allow you to create your own profile or online webpage, but it will also allow you to contact other networking members.

Although most social networking websites are free to use, there are some that are not. Classmates is one of those websites. Many of these websites give you a free trial period or a free membership. That membership can be used to help you determine whether or not the website is worth paying for.

What is nice about paid online social networking websites is that many can be considered exclusive.

Since most Internet users would not want to pay for something that they can get for free, most paid social networking sites are limited on the number of members they have. This may work out to your advantage because it tends to eliminate those who create fake accounts or aim to cause controversy online.

Social networking websites are also popular because they come in a wide variety of different formats. Websites like Yahoo! 360 and MySpace focus on a wide variety of different topics. This means that just about anyone can join. However, there are other social networking sites out there that have a particular focus. These focuses may be on a particular religion, political following, or hobby. Most specialty social networking sites restrict the individuals that can participate in their network; thus, making your experience more enjoyable.

Finally, social networking websites focus on meeting new people, especially online, but over recent months, many have started including additional features only available to their online members. Many social networking members can receive their own free webpage, get free access to popular music videos, a free blog, and much more.

Although social networking websites are popular enough to bring in members on their own, these additional features are, in a way, providing Internet users with an incentive to join.

Mentioned above were a few of the most popular social networks that could be found online. Those networks included MySpace, Yahoo! 360, and Classmates. If you are looking for additional social networking websites, you should easily be able to find some by performing a standard Internet search.

Popular Social Networking Websites



While all social networking websites have their own rules and restrictions, many websites operate in a similar way, with similar goals.

Their goals are to allow Internet users to connect with other Internet users online, often from all around the world. What is nice about social networking websites is that they come in a wide variety of different forms.

There are many websites that are considered "general," websites. These websites do not really have any particular focus, but there are social networking websites that do have a particular focus. Those focuses often include dating, religion, and school.

If online social networking seems interesting to you, you will have to find a community to join. You can easily do this a number of different ways. By speaking to those that you know, on and offline, you could be alerted to popular social networking websites. You can also find these websites on your own by performing a standard Internet search. Whether you perform your own search or rely on recommendations from others, it is likely that you will find a fairly large number of social networking websites.

Orkut is Google's version of a social networking website. This website was created and officially



launched in 2004. Orkut has a large number of members, from all around the world. What is nice about Orkut is that the system is easy to use, that is once you get in. To protect their social networking communities, a large number of social networking websites, including Orkut, have restricted access to the site. If

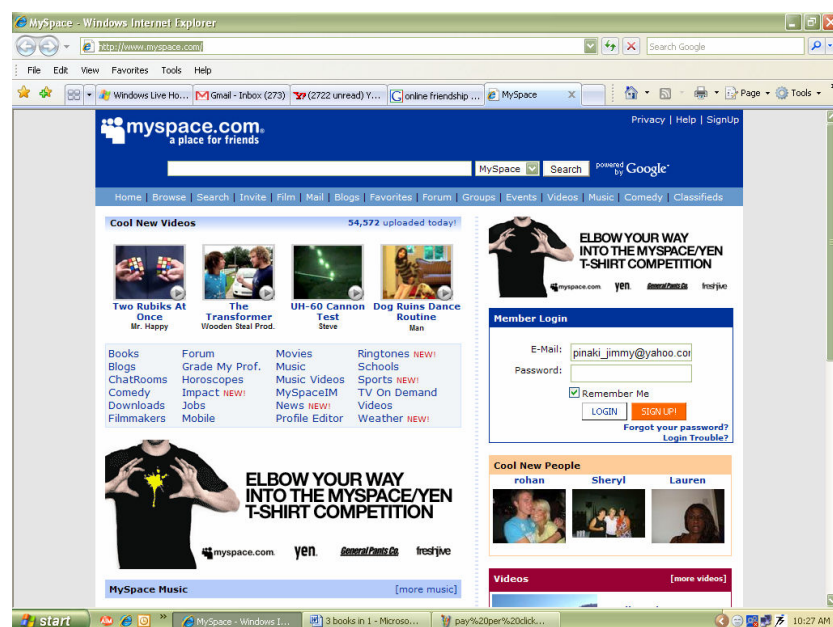
you are interested in joining Orkut you must know someone who is already a member and they must invite you to join the community. If you do not personally know any Orkut member, there is a good chance that you could connect with and obtain an invitation from someone you meet online.

Classmates is an online social networking website that is rapidly increasing in popularity. This website focuses on connecting long lost friends or old classmates. Classmates is free to use, but you must become a paying member to enjoy many of their member benefits. These benefits include, but are not limited to, searching for old classmates, reading their profiles, requesting more information from your classmates, or even contacting them.

MySpace is another popular social networking website that can be found online. In fact, MySpace is known as being the most popular online social networking website. They currently have over one hundred million members! MySpace, like many other social networking websites allows you to create your own profile, in fact, your own personal page. Once your page has been created, you can easily invite other members to become a member of your network and visa versa. In addition to having a traditional profile page, with your personal information, you can also display a large number of pictures, video clips, and music clips. Although there are a number of features that makes MySpace so popular, the most popular reason for its popularity is that fact that it is completely free to use.

As previously mentioned, MySpace, Classmates, and Orkut are just a few of the many social networking websites that you can find online. Additional sites include FriendFinder, Yahoo! 360, and more. To learn more about each of these sites or to join their community, you are advised to visit their online websites and request additional information. You should be able to find these websites by performing a standard Internet search.

MySpace: A Popular Social Networking Website



MySpace is an online social networking website that has literally taken the world by storm. This is because, in what seemed like no time at all, MySpace has grown to become one of the most popular online websites, in the entire world.

The first step in joining this popular online social network is to register for an account. This can be done in a matter of minutes. Although you can view a number of different MySpace pages without registering, it is advised that you do. Registration

will allow you to not only create your own MySpace page, but enjoy many of the other features that can be found on the site. What you may like most about MySpace is that it is completely free to use.

Once you join MySpace, you can create your own profile page. Although this is optional, it is the best way to communicate with others and make new friends. To make the experience easier, MySpace has a fairly large collection of profile templates. These templates not only have an impact on the background of your profile page, but the text fonts as well. In addition to using the pre-designed templates, you can also create your own, especially if you have basic knowledge of HTML.

Many MySpace users have sections that allow them to describe themselves and their likes and dislikes. In addition to these preset sections, you can also add your own. A large number of users have posted clips from their favorite movies, television shows, or music videos. You can also add your own pictures and your own videos, if you choose to do so. Although MySpace does have some rules, which can be found in their terms of use agreement, you basically have unlimited freedom, when it comes to creating your own MySpace page.

After you have created your own MySpace page, you can easily search for others. You can search for others with a wide variety of different keyword phrases. If you are looking for someone who lives near you, you can search for your town. If you are looking for someone who shares your love of animals, you can search for pet lovers. Once you have found the MySpace page of someone who you would like to become friends with, you can invite them to join your network. In addition to inviting others to join your network, there is a good chance that you will be invited to join others.

Although MySpace has been in the media because of its popularity, attention has been given to the popular social networking website, attention it probably didn't wish that it had received. With MySpace, as well as a large number of other networking sites, Internet safety has become a big issue, especially with children. If you are the parent of a child, you may wish to monitor their MySpace activity or ensure that their profile is set to a private listing. MySpace has a number of safety features in place, but to make use of these features you must know that they exist.

In addition to being a traditional social networking website, one that lets you meet and speak to other members, MySpace is well known for its additional features. These features commonly include music videos, horoscopes, chat rooms, careers, and instant messaging. If you are interested in using these features, as well as the many others that can be found on MySpace, you are encouraged to register for your free membership today. You can do this by visiting:

<http://www.myspace.com/>

Facebook: Another Popular Social Networking Website

Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>) may not be as well known as other popular social networking websites, such as Yahoo! 360 or MySpace, but it is still popular. That popularity is mostly among high school students and college students, mostly because Facebook focuses on these individuals in particular. With Facebook, you are required to register for a specific network. That network can either include the high school or college which you attended or are currently attending. Once you have joined the website, you should easily be able to make contact with others who are in the same network.



The network in which you join can be considered an advantage of Facebook, as well as a disadvantage. See, Facebook does not work like most other social networking websites. Instead of being able to communicate with all site members, you are limited to contact with those that are in your particular network, the high school or college you that selected. The creators of Facebook state that this is for your own safety. Although it is safer for your profile and personal information to be viewed by a small number of individuals, you may not necessity want it to be that way.

Although a large amount of focus is placed on high school students and college students, Facebook has added another popular feature to their website. That feature is workplace networks. By joining a specific workplace network, you will be granted access to other community members who work for the same company as you. This feature is nice, especially since many companies have become large corporations or expanded across the country. You may be able to make contact and become friends with a long-distance coworker that you never knew you had.

Another aspect of Facebook that you may find inconvenient is their lack of available information, before you decide to become a community member. When viewing their online website, which can be found at www.facebook.com, it is hard to tell whether or not the site is free to use. Most online social networking sites will make this known right upfront, but Facebook does not. Aside from the price, you should easily be able to obtain additional information on Facebook, before making the decision to become a member. This additional information may include how Facebook works, why you should become a member, how the invite process works, and general rules and restrictions that are in place.

If you are interested in joining the Facebook community, you should do what you should do with all other social networking websites, research. By taking the time to research and examine everything that Facebook has to offer, you should be able to decide whether or not this popular networking community is what you were looking for. There is a good chance that it will be, but if not, do not worry. There are literally an unlimited number of other social networking websites that you can join.

Creating Your Social Networking Website Profile

How you would like to meet and communicate with other Internet users, especially ones that share the same views and beliefs as you do? When it comes to easily finding and communicating online with other Internet users, social networking sites are, perhaps, the best way to go.

If you are interested in joining a social networking website, the first thing that you will need to do is find a network to join. You can easily find a number of networks by performing a standard Internet search. For the best search results, you may want to search with the words social networking or social

networking websites. In your search, it is likely that that you come up with a fairly large number of different networking sites. Popular sites that may be included in your search results may include, but will not be limited to, MySpace, Orkut, Yahoo! 360, FriendFinder, FriendWise, Facebook, and Classmates.



Once you have made the decision to join a particular social networking website, whether or not it is one of the ones mentioned above, you will need to register with the site. Even free networking communities require that you go through the registration process. Once you are registered, you should be able to start communicating with other community members. Before you start communicating, you may need to develop your online profile or profile page, depending on the networking site in question. Although it may seem easy enough to create a profile, there are many Internet users who are unsure exactly what they should and should not include.

Perhaps, one of the most important things to include in your online website is your picture. While a personal picture is optional, it is ideal. Many Internet users enjoy taking to someone that they can see in their minds, without a picture this is difficult. If you are looking to use social networking websites just to meet new friends you may not necessarily need to post a private picture, but you may need to if you are looking to find love online. When it comes to Internet dating, many individuals will not even view an online profile if a picture is not included.

In addition to your photograph, you may want to include your name. Now, when it comes to your name, you need to be cautious. You are advised against giving your full name, especially if your profile or profile page contains a personal photograph of you. In addition to your name, you may want to put down your location. As with your name it is important to display caution. Your picture, your address, and your full name can be dangerous, especially if it falls into the wrong hands. As much as you would like to fill your social networking profiles with personal information, you are advised to think about your safety before anything else.

You may also want to include information on yourself. This information may include your hobbies, issues that are important to do, your likes, and your dislikes. With many social networking websites, including MySpace, you will find that there are preset profile fields for this information. In addition to preset questions or categories on your likes and dislikes, you may also find additional information, including fun questionnaires. Many social networking websites will ask that you describe your favorite color, your goals in life, your most embarrassing moment, and so on. As with your other personal information, it is important to stay as vague and possible and not use any full names, especially real ones.

By keeping the above mentioned points in mind, you should not only be able to create an online social networking profile that is filled with valuable information, but you can do so while staying safe at the same time. Your safety on the Internet is in your hands, that is why it is important to think about safety, as well as Internet popularity.

What NOT to Put in Your Social Network Profile

As previously mentioned, your social networking profile is important when it comes to meeting other Internet users. This is because, in most cases, Internet users are looking to chat with someone who has the same goals, views, beliefs, and interests as they do. Without a personal profile, it would be difficult or impossible to tell what your interests are. That is why social networking profiles are not only important, but they are needed.

When it comes to social networking profiles, a lot of focus has been placed on what you should include in your profile or display on your profile page. It has been said that pictures produce the best responses, as well as detailed personal information. Although a picture and detailed personal information may help to increase your page views, you may be getting views that you do not necessarily want. Despite what you may believe, most social networking websites do not have restrictions on who can view your personal profile. In fact, Internet users, even those that do not belong to your online community, can easily see profile.



Since anyone, literally anyone, can see your social networking profile, on most social networking websites, you are advised to be cautious. Essentially, this means that instead of focusing on what you should put in your online profile, you should be focusing on what not to put. This is one the best ways to protect your safety, both on and offline.

Pictures (again!) are often recommended with social networking websites. If you are interested in posting a personal picture of yourself in your online profile you can do so, but you are advised to carefully choose that picture. While you will want to look your best, you are advised against posting a picture that is too revealing or seductive in nature. Most Internet users can look at these types of pictures without feeling a thing, but for others these types of pictures spell danger.

If you make the decision to post a picture of yourself in your social networking website profile, you need to be careful about the rest of the information that you post. Although you may not necessarily think about it, a picture is just a picture, but combined with your name and address, it could be a deadly combination. You are advised to only post your first name in your profile. This will make it more difficult for anyone to try and contact you off of the Internet.

It is also advised that you carefully choose your location. A large number of online social networking sites require that you select a city, as well as a state. If it is allowed, you may only wish to list your state and not the city. If you are required to list the city and the state that you live in, you may want to think about using a nearby city or town, especially if you live in a small town. If an Internet predator wanted to contact you and you lived in a small town, it could be fairly easy for them to find you. That is why it is advised that you carefully select the answer to the location question.

In addition to the above precautionary measures, it is advised that you do not post detailed information on your children, the location of your home, your income, or when you will be leaving for vacation! By keeping these and the above mentioned points in mind, you should be able to enjoy online social networking without having to always look behind your back.

The Advantages and Disadvantages to Using Social Networking Sites to Find Dates



Have you been looking for love, but in all of the wrong places? Many singles are fed up with the traditional bar scene; therefore, many are looking for alternatives when it comes to meeting and possibly falling in love with someone. One of those alternatives is online dating. Online dating has skyrocketed in popularity (you've guessed it by now... with social networking sites!).

Millions of Americans have turned to the Internet in hopes of finding love. If you are thinking about doing the same, you may be wondering if it is really worth it. To determine whether or not it is, you are advised to examine the advantages and disadvantages of online dating.

Before you can begin to examine the advantages and disadvantages of using your social networking website for dating, it is important to remember one thing: there are two main types of social networking websites.

The first type is often classified as traditional networking websites. These websites are websites that tend to have an open membership. An open membership means that anyone can join them.

The second type is known as specialty social networking websites. Specialty social networking websites tend to focus on a particular topic or interest, such as online dating.

One thing that you may not know about online dating and social networking is that they are almost always connected. When many individuals go in search for love online, many head to online dating websites. Did you know that online dating websites are actually socially networking websites? What sets online dating websites apart from traditional social networking sites is that all of the individuals who are a part of the online community are looking to find love. In fact, that is one of the many advantages to using social networking websites, especially those with a focus on relationships.

When you join a traditional social networking site, one that allows all different types of Internet users to join, it is often hard to tell what many are looking for. A large number of network users are looking for love, but many more are only looking for friendships. Online dating websites help to eliminate confusion and awkward moments, especially when approaching someone who is not interested in starting a relationship.

Another one of the many benefits to using online social networking sites to find a date is that you literally have an unlimited number of different choices. Social networking websites have expended overtime. In fact, many networks have as many as a million members. This means that if you are looking for love online, there is a good chance that you can find a love interest online. In fact, you could probably find more than one!

Although social network dating has its advantages, there are disadvantages as well. One of the main disadvantages is the cost of using the networks service. As previously mentioned, online dating websites are the best type of social network to join, especially if you are looking for a romantic partner. Unfortunately, unlike most traditional networking sites, most dating sites require a paid membership. To many this membership is worth the cost, but overtime it could get quite expensive and you are not guaranteed any results.

In addition to the cost of dating online, there are a large number of safety concerns that could be considered disadvantages as well. Unfortunately, the Internet has made it easy for individuals to claim to be someone who they are not. Essentially, this means that you could be starting an online relationship with someone who is not as they look in their photos or their personality is not as they described to you. While this will not only lead to disappointment when you find out, it could also lead to danger. There have been numerous reports of instances where online dates resulted in abuse or murder; therefore, you are always urged to be careful and meet your dates in a safe, public place.

The above mentioned advantages and disadvantages of social networking dating are just a few of the many. One you have examined all of these advantages and disadvantages, you can compare the two. If you find that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages then social networking and dating might be right for you.

Should Your Join a Social Networking Website?



As the book draws to an end and if you aren't part of the next wave of the future just yet, you probably want to ask yourself:

"Am I interested in meeting new people online?"

And if your answer is YES, hop in right now! Although social networking is here to stay, but why wait any longer?

Before the era of social networking websites, it was difficult to meet other Internet users. If you tried, you would have to rely on chat rooms or instant messaging services. As nice as these popular Internet features are, they are not always considered safe. With chat rooms or instant messaging programs you were often given little

reassurance that a person was who they claimed to be. Without profiles, there was no way that you could learn more about a particular Internet user, even if you wanted to. Social networking websites have changed that.

Not only have social networking websites made it safer to meet people online, it also allows you to meet people that have the same or similar interests as yourself. Most social networking websites allow you to create your own profile; in fact, many even give you your own webpage. These profiles or pages will allow you to share information on yourself, including your likes and dislikes. Since all other network members should have the same pages and profiles, it should be fairly easy for you to meet up with other Internet users, especially those who enjoy or believe in the same things that you do.

Another one of the many reasons why you should join a social networking website is because you literally have a wide variety of different choices. As social networking websites increased in popularity, so did the number of websites that could be found online. Although MySpace is often deemed the most popular online social networking website, there are others that are just as easy or as much fun to use. You should easily be able to find those websites by performing a standard Internet search.

In your search, for social networking websites, you will come across a number of different networks. Many of those sites will have a particular focus. Unlike MySpace, which accepts just about any Internet user, there are online networks that aim to accept Internet users that have a particular hobby, view, or belief. Online, it is not uncommon to find social networking websites that focus on politics, religion, pets, sports, and more. If you are unsure about joining an online networking community, specialty networking sites may be your best bet. They are a great way to test the waters and they are nice because they automatically pair you with Internet users who have the same interests, views, or beliefs as you do.

Perhaps, the greatest reasons why you should join a social networking website is because most are free to use. Popular free networks include Yahoo! 360, Orkut, and MySpace. In addition to free social networks, there are online networks in which you are required to pay to join. Although you may not want to pay for something that you can obtain for free elsewhere, you will find that most paid networks offer you more membership benefits, when compared to free social networking sites.

Due to the fact that most social networking websites are free to use or at least free to try, you are encouraged to give them a shot. If you are unsatisfied with what you see, you can easily cancel your membership, often at anytime.