

Creative First Dates Increase Likelihood for a Second Date

Scheduling a first date is cause for a lot of anxiety -- regardless of gender. A first encounter with someone new should center on communication, as learning about a date's habits, personalities and beliefs is essential in getting to the future meet-ups. Combined with creativity (and maybe bit of a sweat), date night has the potential for the makings of an amazing and memorable relationship.

Activity-based dates are always an interesting way to get to know a potential mate -- or discover that a partner is not suitable for a second. Participating in something active releases built-up nervous energy that generally surrounds first dates. There is also an athletic spirit, which is an opportunity to show off an adventurous side -- a wholly non-boring approach to life and love. Activity dates prevent overly romantic situations, which tend to make certain people uncomfortable in the early stages -- especially having never met.

Entertaining dates are incredibly effective in many ways, but remember to keep a rotating constant of conversation -- the event itself is a great platform to talk about doing something that is a shared passion. Also important, that with activity dates, the public setting will aid in promoting a comfortable atmosphere. Scheduling a date that will take enough time, but not weigh too long or too short on either end is important, and there is no need to overspend on creative first dates. Movies, while still an inexpensive adolescent standard, are a difficult opportunity to talk and get to know a date on an adult level. Save the quiet theater and the DVD rentals for further down the road on the relationship path.

Great examples of outdoor activities include: kayaking, biking (pack a mini-picnic in a backpack), hiking, miniature golfing or volunteering dog walking at the local animal shelter (activity AND a good heart!). If weather decides to not cooperate, bowling is a incredibly-fun date, especially if neither partner is very good (remember to bring socks!) During winter, fewer options may exist, depending on weather constraints, but sled riding is not only silly fun, but also a great opportunity to continue afterward with a delicious cup of hot chocolate. Again, be certain to give date enough notice to find a set of snow pants and boots -- or whatever is expected of the other person -- when planning a great first date.

Unique is a key word in planning a first meeting with a paramour, as these memories result in long-lasting impressions. While there is a universal discontent at which party is responsible for the planning of first date, both should have a general preparedness -- which should be easy if the other person is knowledgeable of the other's likes and dislikes. Always having a few original ideas on-hand will aid in decision-making once you do a quick Q&A by telephone with a new date. But if scheduling plans for a first date, *blind* date, be sure to ask questions before making reservations or buying tickets.

The Dating Times Are A-Changing

Throughout our lifetime of circumventing the dating world, people change. We blame change on our partner. But WE change. We grow up. Life takes over. Responsibilities like work or kids become our priority.

We grow a little tired or jaded of the Rat Race to the altar.

In our 20s, as expected, we live a hurried and scattered life of good times and education. We further explore our sexuality, our personality and all that “what do I wanna be when I grow up?” nonsense. In reality, most people don’t even figure that out for another decade.

Why rush it.

Because by the time we are 30, we have a good general idea WHO we are and WHAT we want. Our expectations in both life and in relationships are settled. We have memorized lists of attractive qualities in the opposite (or same) sex. We have dated the trolls and have likely been in love once or twice. We are familiar with heartbreak and the devastation of Love and Loss. Some of us even have a broken engagement or divorce under our belts.

However, some men and women within the 30s age group feel as though the dating pool has “dried up.” The search for a commitment partner turns almost desperate. It’s certainly expected – women who want children are at a sprint to the finish line. Tick tock. Men, with the ability to harvest eggs well into old age, remain firm on a lazy approach to the marriage and children.

I’m not talking about EVERYBODY, of course. Some people marry right out of high school, have a couple babies and settle into a lovely comfortable life.

But I’m talking about the Singles. YOU.

How has dating changed as you’ve aged?

Guaranteed Ways Not To Get a Second Date

First dates don't require much – a little common courtesy, matched with easy-going conversation, perhaps, over coffee or a small meal.

So why do so many single people mess up this seemingly easy step?

Here are a few aspects of first dates to remember:

- **Appearance** Don't arrive unshowered or looking disheveled. There is nothing wrong with being casual, but look as though you have put forth some effort.
- **Hygiene** As with showering (mentioned above), brush your teeth. Spit out your gum. Nothing is more annoying or distracting than body odor, or a date smacking away nervously at chewing gum.
- **Timeliness** Don't be late. Ever.
- **Location** No loud parties or clubs. No movies. No group dates. None of these are welcome environments for truly getting to know one another.
- **Food** Don't chew with your mouth, open or talk with food in your mouth. Do not slurp your soup or coffee. Don't be overly picky. Don't order a salad. And whatever you do, do NOT lick your plate.
- **Sobriety** Do not show up to a first date drunk, and don't proceed to establish a Drunk Fest.
- **Conversation** Don't talk about yourself too much, and certainly do not bring up your last six relationships. Conversation should be an easy volley back-and-forth between two people, not one person gushing endlessly about his or her own life for 20 straight minutes. Or worse: their job. Potentially heated topics such as politics, religion and money are best left for later.
- **Humor** Use sparingly. Sarcasm is for only a few, and jokes pointed at your date – although well intended – may fall on deaf ears. And un-laughing bellies.
- **Politeness** Being rude to hosts, service staff, workers or other customers is noticed and definitely not appreciated. That said, don't pay *too* much attention to the bartenders, wait staff or other hot passers-by.
- **Connectivity** Talking on cell or texting is a huge no-no. How about connecting with the person sitting across from you?

- **Reality** Keep it real, Big Pretender. Liars and braggers rarely get the second chance to remake that first impression. And whatever you do, do not skip out on the bill.
- **The Usual Suspects** Inappropriate behaviors include: belching, farting, consistent swearing or spitting. And well, hitting.

But you should know all this, right?

Self-Awareness is necessary before dating after a divorce

Being in the dating world after a divorce can be incredibly overwhelming. Many “rules” seemingly change, as generations of men and women become part of the single pool again – sometimes decades of marriage. Remembering that 50 per cent of marriages end in divorce can ease anxieties of the newly single. Many are in those very shoes.

All personal affairs need to be in order before dating can begin. Separation of all emotions, legal issues and finances attached to a prior spouse, is imperative. That said, always respect the ex – no matter the ending. Acting as a victim is just as much of a turn-off as being a heartless, uncaring shrew. Keeping in mind there was a time of greatness in the marriage will increase confidence. Never revenge date – it is not fair to anyone, especially if children are part of a divorce agreement. With divorce, there are likely other bad examples already set, so prevent this unnecessary exposure from the kids.

The primary focus before dating is self-awareness. Taking inventory of what qualities are attractive in another person will prevent repeating mistakes that may have been made while married. Internally summarize these traits and qualities, and physically write down what is desirable or wanted in a partner. Having been in a long-term commitment relationship that ended, an assessment is mandatory. Do not forget to compile a list of “red flags” or non-negotiables, and be sure this list complements a likewise dating pool.

Do not develop bad habit in the meantime. Do not become an emotional eater. Do not over-indulge in sexual affairs. Level out the caffeine. And certainly do not develop any new bad habits, like smoking. Always improve yourself. Learn new activities. Volunteer. Work Out. Eat healthy. Take this time to get a new hairstyle. Buy new clothes. Again, do not over-indulge, but don't completely alienate happiness from a fresh outlook.

Many feel isolated after a divorce – perhaps friends were split or couples sided with the ex-spouse – so finding a new set of friends can be refreshing. Plus, it is good practice in meeting new people and brushing up on dated conversational skills. This could potentially open up new outlets to meet dates that fit the profile. With new people around, self-esteem will increase exponentially since none of these new people (or suitors) know of past failures. The feelings of hopelessness can be nonexistent and eventually disappear.

Even with new friends, there will still be a handful of the old, there specifically as a negative reminder, it seems. Don't listen to these negative or intrusive friends who appear as such or wholly just to create a change. Each person has different paths and successes in the dating world. Do not become unfamiliar -- no “sexing up.” While the provocative dress of a friend may appear externally attractive, it may only enhance internal uncertainties. Unwanted advice (with professedly good intentions) can develop into desperation or insecurity.

There is already enough rejection with dating – likely not as difficult as a divorce – so keep things in perspective. Dating is not mandatory, but making sure confidence is lined with positive emotions is a solid preparation for the possibility of a new connection.

Choose: career or relationship.

We all need to work. There are bills due every month – mortgage or rent, car loans and insurance – everybody needs funds to enjoy hobbies or fulfilled happiness. But many times being a workaholic can lead to disappointment in your dating life.

A common complaint from successful career women is remaining unattached. It appears that a career woman needs to prove herself more than her male peers in the office. And focusing solely on a career can many times consume the time one would have for developing a successful relationship. She almost needs to prove equally to her married female friends that there is nothing wrong with her choices.

You need to figure out *your* personal priorities. There is nothing wrong with placing importance on a career, just the same as you cannot fault the woman who would rather fixate on being a wife and mother. Acknowledge that you may not have everything as it appears with the next woman (and likely, that woman does not “have it all”). But be prepared to have only one or the other.

Finding a life mate is similar to working: you interview for the “job” (your potential Mr. or Mrs. Right in this case), you may even be a temp-to-hire and subsequently face frequent bouts of disappointment. Think of this as your probationary period – it will take a good 60-90 days to truly get to know someone. Likewise with your job. You may even realize you’ve been in the wrong career all along (read: dating the wrong type of person).

Looking for a job or working toward a career goal takes an equal amount of time as circumventing the dating world. You need to determine which is your destination.

Dating and Local Long Distance

This post isn't so much about long-distance relationships, but the distance that exists even in social engagements within your general metropolitan area. How important is this location in dating?

Whether you live in a big city, medium city or a farm, the Internet has opened up our boundaries. We are no longer regulated to meeting the available singles only where we reside. It's obvious math that smaller towns have smaller dating pools, and as we all know, the size of the pool rarely is comparable to quality. But be it suburban sprawling commute or a long trip on the rain, there are complications in taking out somebody local who lives 40 minutes away even more so than an actual LDR.

Two people living in two completely different neighborhoods, boroughs or communities could potentially open up new experiences – especially by learning new areas or teaching a date *your* favorites places to hang. But there are distinct attitudes in both suburban and city life, beginning with means of transportation and ending in cultural and entertainment dissimilarities.

You need to compare one potential suitor to the next – even when meeting someone online – and determine if you have the effort to dating inter-area code. While driving cross-town could be exciting at first, months into a relationship, it could be exhausting, and otherwise cause a disruptive rift or resentment with your partner.

But remember in the end – when and if this relationship works out – there is the relocation process. Ensure that one of you is willing to make *that* effort.

What difference does age make?

Behold the cougar. Or the aging playboy. A relationship with a serious difference in age is sure to turn heads or garner a few whispers. You've likely heard the inappropriate advice and generalizations with these "May-December Romances." It is said age is nothing but a number, but should you date someone significantly older or younger?

There are some benefits to intergenerational dating, more than just a thrill. There is an extension of experiences – a possibility of finding new hobbies, interacting within additional social circles and perhaps being more adventurous. The age disparity of a partner can bring about an exciting new dimension to dating and recharge a stagnant life. A balance of old and new makes for less boredom.

An older mate has the aura of confidence and success that is a very attractive quality in a partner. Ensure there is no ulterior motive by a younger partner. Keeping important things like money or marriage out of the relationship equation is a good detector of a person's motivations. But take this opportunity to explore someone you regularly wouldn't normally date.

Like interests are important, so always make sure your age differences coincide with your dating goals and ideals. An intellectual compatibility is also incredibly important. Discover if this relationship is just for fun – no commitment, no strings attached or something that could develop into a long-term commitment.

An older man or man typically dates young for physical reasons – be it attractiveness, "arm candy" or for an increase in sex drive. Bridge the gap with constant communication. Setting goals together is imperative.

Nobody wants to be compared to a cat-like predator or an aging "leader" of harem of blondes, but age difference itself should not be a red flag.

If You're A Man, You May Be Clueless

Some men swear their life by being single, but others who crave companionship. With both kinds, many remain clueless to dating courtesies.

Women silently judge the actions of men, and with these suggestions you may correct a bad habit or two. Perform a no-no, and you'll not only find yourself out of bounds, but without a date.

Social media has complicated the dating world. Never ask her out on Facebook. Or a text message. Passive-aggressiveness rarely nets results. Simply call and ask her out. There *are* still women who believe in men initiating.

Never bombard with phone calls or utilize *all* forms of social media to connect. Save the Tweets, and NEVER Google her (this takes ALL the fun out of first date). It can be borderline creepy.

Communication is tricky – not calling for a few days or worse, calling too much. Ladies may be confusing, but when refraining from calling, she assumes you are disinterested. Keep the momentum – send her a quick text, a simple “Good night.” Waiting a couple days before “the call” may be a turn-off.

Two calls max is sufficient to schedule another date. Unresponsive women are generally not interested.

A way to quickly end a date is asking a woman, “Why are you not married?” The woman has been asking likely herself that question. She doesn't need reminding – from a stranger, nonetheless – that she is still single. Worse, she now feels somehow damaged. Tread carefully around presumptuous questions.

Be attentive to your date, and be yourself. Tuck the Blackberry away for the evening, and don't behave in a manner that displays bad behavior. You may be surprised to learn that she was looking for *you* – a Mr. Nice Guy.

Would you date a relationship blogger?

I regularly hear from dates the disinterest in dating a popular blogger. While I never out anyone or give first names, other bloggers exist solely to use the online platform to wipe a bad date's name in the mud. Or their shoe, as it were.

One writer's therapy is another's slander. Where is the line?

I feel to some degree that the other person being subjected to the trials and potentially exposing words on the 'net deserve some privacy, hence, the nicknames.

But even then, certain people were still unwilling to put their personal lives on display.

Tips for dating relationship bloggers:

1. **Don't date solely for the publicity.** Remember: publicity could be bad. And in dating, negative press does not equate to that of the public relations industry.
2. **Date bloggers who allow you some privacy** – *especially* if you request to not be written about in advance.
3. **Do not read this bloggers entire history** before the date. There will be nothing left for conversation. You may scan the Web, if say, that person has not called in two weeks.
4. **If you decide to ignore #3:** Take the date commentary and put it into perspective. Perhaps you still have something to learn about dating. Perhaps you are following the wrathful words of a dispassionate shrew. Now you know.
5. **Be prepared that this person does NOT write about you.** There is a chance you are something special, and yours might be the private relationship she begins to treasure.

Dating Remotely

A growing trend in the workplace, many employees are choosing to work from home. In that same manner, a shift of dating “remotely” has become the new long-distance relationship – with likewise set of positive and negative characteristics.

Long-distance relationships differ from each couple. As sets of rules are commonplace, personalities and values make for different outcomes, but there is a commonality of guidelines to determine if a remote relationship will work.

Communication is the ever-present buzzword in relationships, even more so while a partner in a long-distance relationship. As self-doubt and Jealousy tend to rear its ugly head, taking control of rational thoughts and emotions is paramount. It is important to keep tendencies for second-guessing at bay, as trust is an essential element in this type of relationship. Too many relationships rarely have even that as a strong base, which will make any dating scenario extremely fragile.

An individual controls true trust, and that person determines the capacity of comfortability. This is exceptionally difficult at the initial onset partnership, and this is where trust and naiveté need to coexist.

For an individual with a desire for personal space and increased time alone, long-distance relationships allow a certain level of that independence. Look to expanding options when selecting companions -- online dating makes it increasingly easy to establish all the important characteristics of a positive relationship first, and then to expand boundaries beyond that of a residential proximity.

Space is natural for someone who has been subjected to independence for a majority of an adult life. In a relationship flow, being long-distance can prevent certain individuals from becoming too “clingy” too soon, and potentially chasing away a perfect match. Getting to know someone intimately through phone or email conversations can establish a great base for a solid and long understanding of one another. There is an immense trust in another person that develops naturally over time.

With that, drama is kept to a minimum because of limited visitations – in-person meetings are like that of a vacation. There is no time for misappropriated questions, and a greater appreciation for time spent together.

Loneliness is a typical con in dating from afar, but it should never become so severe that it is emotionally unbearable. With modern technology, there are many opportunities to stay connected, especially so with the advent of cell phones, web cameras and visual Internet voice calls. There should never be a reason to be wholly out-of-touch. “Touch” is extremely important when caring for another person – in many different regards. Meeting schedules, and defining how to experience one another should remain a priority, even if the possibility of in-person contact is few-and-far between. Never allow the loneliness to become painful, as this pressure will develop into a discontent that no long-term relationship will survive.

The initial negatives of a long-distance alliance should not dissuade from finding a potential mate. While long-distance relationships take on a different level of “work,” the scenario is not built universally. Dating remotely in modern society opens opportunities greater than a body that resides in a surrounding zip code.

Hang on, Snoopy.

Your partner missed dinner again. Their emotional apathy is inconsolable, and your relationship feels DOA. Compile that distance with anxiety and even anger, and the twisted thoughts of indiscretion is seemingly apparent. You have questions or realize missing chunks of time, so you start looking for answers. In your partner's email.

Snooping is more than being perversely nosy. By accessing your partner's personal information, you've already charged them with some level of cheating. Any "evidence" found in their computer, email or cell phone is adding insult to injury. The intentions of snooping means there are already larger problems lingering within the relationship – and that is almost always a lack of communication. Regardless of what answers you hope the snooping will lead to, you'll likely discover something you'd rather not – or suspected in the first place.

Going through his or her laptop is not a means of talking out your problems. Being a snoop will never alleviate those nagging thoughts.

Restrain from jealousy as much as possible in relationships. If you require constant reassurance, then ask questions. Never let little concerns – like late-night text messages – fester. Make your awareness and approval (or disapproval, in this case) known. If there are still lingering suspicions, perhaps an inventory needs to be made of your current relationship.

But do not be tempted to snoop. The intrusion of privacy is dishonest. The reality is in the trust, and the weakness to snoop around leads to an even greater distance and distrust. And likely, more than a few misunderstandings. If your partner is giving you a reason to be untrustworthy, communication needs to take precedence.

To Thee I... Settle?

The Internet is buzzing with the recent release of Lori Gottlieb's book "Marry Him: The Case for Settling for Mr. Good Enough." Gottlieb advises women over the age of 30 to lower standards in order to be married, regardless of feeling love.

Don't you think settling for a partner that's just "good enough" is not placing enough value on whether YOU'RE good enough? Keeping certain relationships "musts" is important with dating, as basing a relationship on many superficial qualities is recipe for disaster.

But marriage is never an answer for unhappiness.

All relationships require some aspect of compromise, but I don't believe in compromising yourself. Find the qualities that are IMPORTANT in a partner and focus on finding someone who fits those. The emphasis here is being REALISTIC about these qualities – something I think Gottlieb touches on, but almost condescendingly. Likely, you *can't* have it all, but settling for less than your worth will manifest itself into resentment as the relationship progresses.

There is nothing wrong with wanting marriage – or children, for that matter. Find a partner who shares your values, your passion for life and with whom can communicate openly. The important backbone to a committed relationship is not one based on a ticking biological clock or sense of loneliness.

Or worse – desperation.

Give a relationship time to flourish. Don't pass on a potential partner without first giving them an honest chance. I've found that most of the so-called sparks felt early in casual relationships, soon fizzled, and I repeated a pattern of "chasing the spark," which ultimately left me disappointed. My more long-term commitments developed slowly. Honestly.

So, never settle. You will never be truly happy if you do.

If You're A Man, You May Be Clueless

Being single: some men swear their life by maintaining their status, but there are genuine men who crave companionship. Unfortunately so, there are also handfuls of men who remain clueless as to some dating courtesies. If you believe the single men in “Swingers” represent ideals in dating, you might be a bit out of touch with certain “rules” in the dating world – specifically, what women are thinking.

Yes, the women have silently judged men and their actions, and in reading this, hopefully you can correct a bad habit or two. Here are a couple dating suggestions, that if said or performed, you might find yourself out of bounds. And, again, without a date.

Social media and modern technology has made the dating world incredibly complicated, but even if it takes all your willpower, do *not* ask her out with a Facebook message. Or a text message. Passive-aggressiveness rarely works. If you are already “friended” through these online networks, you likely know her through another means. If you want a date, ask her out – use the phone function on your cell, and dial the numbers to call her. Yes, there are still women who believe in the traditional “men should ask me out” mantra. Save the follower Tweets for after a few dates, and do NOT Google her (seriously, want to take ALL the fun out of the first date?).

Remembering that, never bombard her with unnecessary (and plentiful) phone calls or utilize *all* forms of social media to connect. While you may be overly excited or even nervous, it can be construed as creepy. And who wants to date an Internet stalker?

Not calling. Or calling too much. Ladies may be difficult to decipher sometimes, but when you refrain from calling a girl, she will assume you are not interested. *Especially* after a great date, keep the momentum going – send her a quick text before bed. QUICK. Simple. Good night. Whoever told you that waiting a couple days before “the call,” likely missed out on his second opportunity. Not like he would admit his rejection though.

One or two phone calls are sufficient to ask for another date, and if you don't get a response, remember the rule about the reasons women think you didn't call: not interested.

Let's say you (somehow) got a chance at a first date; feeling somehow more comfortable, you ask a woman, “Why are you not married?” Talk about a good way to chase someone away before a potential relationship goes anywhere. *Ladies, am I right?* Not only has the woman likely been asking herself that very question for a decade (or two), she doesn't need a reminder by a stranger that she is, indeed, still single – and now, feeling that there must be something wrong with her. This doesn't even account for certain women who do not desire the white dress and the walking down the aisle and whatnot. Tread carefully around presumptuous questions.

Most importantly, gentlemen, be attentive and be yourself. Tuck the Blackberry away for the evening, stop thinking about work – don't behave in a prickly manner just because you believe a woman may like you and your bad-boy charms. You may be surprised to learn that she was looking for *you* – a Mr. Nice Guy.