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Key tips for dating online successfully

Many people wrongly assume that using an online dating service is the equivalent of throwing in the towel and screaming, “All right already, I’ll do it — I’m desperate!”

Actually, online dating is not for the desperate.

Research shows that more than 40 million Americans (40% of all singles) use online dating services. It has become a very successful way to meet someone who is compatible.

Many online dating services are even hiring psychologists to help with their personality profiles. They want to make sure that they have scientific studies to back their matching programs.

But online dating comes with some particular issues. Here are some simple do’s and don’ts for making online dating easier and more successful.

Rejections. Don’t take “no” responses from others online personally. You may find that you send a lot of “hello” messages, with no replies. The truth is that some people date online more for entertainment than to meet their soul mate. Also, feel free to say “no” to anyone online. And if you don’t want your profile found by students, colleagues or clients, try one of the private online dating services.

Honesty. Last week, one Free Press reader shared with me his frustration that the women he met in person did not match their profiles. Some people aren’t honest and don’t post recent photos. But be advised, you need to be truthful when describing yourself. Outright lying just won’t work — it’ll blow up in your face when your date learns you are not 25 or a personal trainer.

Take your time. Studies show that relationships develop faster online. My advice is to wait at least one week before you meet face-to-face. And, before you meet in person, move the conversation from online to phone. During a phone chat you’ll get a better sense of whether your personalities click.

Safety rules. There are several rules to remember. First, when you give someone your phone number online, use your cell, rather than your home or work phone. If things don’t work out, cell phone numbers are much easier to change. Next, if you do meet in person, always pick a neutral busy spot like a coffee shop or a mall. Don’t have your date pick you up or drive you home. Also, tell a friend where you are going to meet this person, what time and your date’s name. Finally, don’t drink too much on the first meeting. People seem much more attractive and interesting after a few glasses of wine and it’s easier to say or do something you didn’t plan on doing.

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