

# The Art of Dating

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In a dating world where girls can ask guys out and nobody knows who should pay, those old rules about dating from the 1950s no longer apply. If the gold standards of dating behavior are now obsolete, how are singles in the new millennium supposed to act in the dating circuit? Dating is not as rigid as it used to be—which can be great for enhancing spontaneity and bring diversity into dating partners and activities—and with flexibility also comes ambiguity. Keep reading to learn the new dating rules and how to ensure a great first date.

## Before the Date: Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

### *The Days Before*

- **Do not go into a first date without a plan.** Where are you going to go? How much money will you need? How are you going to get there? How should you and your date be dressed?
- **Communicate with your date.** Is there a special way your date should dress? What time are you going to pick him/her up? Let them know what your plan is so they can prepare as well.

### *The Day of the Date*

- **Groom.** Take a shower, wash your hair and brush your teeth.
- **Dress fashionably and appropriately.** Men should wear pants (either khakis or nice jeans), and women should wear clothes that flatter their bodies. No matter what, you should wear clothes that are comfortable, flattering and that fit. Sexy but understated is the best look. When you are deciding what to wear, think “understated elegance.” Men, no holes in your clothes. Women, make sure the girls are locked, loaded and covered.
- **Smell good, but not overpowering.** Go easy on the after-shave and perfume and remember breath mints!

### *It's Date Time...*

- **Know where you are going and how long it will take.** If your date lives in the boonies, know how far away it is and the twisting/turning roads to get there. And, don't get lost.
- **Be punctual.** Being late gives a horrible impression, and you want this night to go really well. You will be setting yourself up for success if you are on time.
- **Clean up your car.** You don't want your date to smell your left-over lunch from last week or wonder what he/she is sitting on. Your car does not have to be spotless, but at least picked up with no weird smells.

## During the Date: Manners, Social Skills and Conversation

### *Manners and Social Skills*

Great tips for making a great impression on your date:

- **If your date looks nice, tell them.** If they don't, tell them anyway!
- **Give your full attention to your date.** Turn off your cell phone, don't look at other people and make sure you do not establish a more friendly relationship with the wait staff than your date.
- **DO NOT ridicule your date or make fun of other people.** Friendly banter is okay, but make sure both of you are in on the game.
- **Don't get drunk.** You can have a beer or glass of wine (if you are 21), but don't get sloppy drunk.
- **Say please and thank you when people do nice things for you.** If your date opens the door for you or pays for the date, say thank you. And, if you get to the door first, open it for your date.
- **Be gracious about money.** Offer to pay the bill, then offer to pay half, and then, if your date refuses, offer to contribute in some way. Contributions can be anything from paying the tip, buying a drink after dinner or saying you'll pick up the next date. The goal is to not look like a moocher.
- **Get to know your date, but don't be pushy.** Make sure you ask questions and listen attentively. Do not, though, make your date feel like he/she is the target at a firing range and your questions are bullets.
- **Respect your date as if he/she is the president.** You do not have to like their choices or what they want, but you must respect them anyway. If your date does not want you to smoke, don't. Laugh at his/her jokes, even if they are not funny. Keep the conversation on dinner appropriate topics, even if you are doing a different activity.

- **NEVER NEVER NEVER presume anything about sexual activities.** Please, for the sake of everyone, keep your clothes on at all times. And, DO NOT spring sex on your date! If you have mutually agreed upon having sexual play, then that is your business, otherwise, consider it a taboo activity.
- **Most Importantly:** At the core of using your manners and social skills, people merely want to be treated with respect, consideration and honesty.

### *The Art of Conversation*

The foundation of a good date is being able to talk easily and feel comfortable around each other. While these two things may seem different, if you cannot talk easily, you will not feel comfortable around each other. Therefore, good conversation is vital. Here's what to do:

- **It's all about give and take.** You talk, your date talks, then you talk again, and so on. Don't monopolize the conversation, but make sure you are an active participant. And elaborate, elaborate, elaborate. Avoid answering questions with only “yes” and “no.”
- **If your date does not want to discuss something, don't badger him/her about it.** There are just some topics people don't want to talk about. Respect that, say it is okay and move on. Remember that people have all sorts of issues (like family conflict and difficulties with school) and hitting on one unknowingly is bound to happen. What makes or breaks a date is if you respect your date's wishes and drop the subject.
- **Don't ask private questions of your date and don't give them private information about yourself.** If Mexican food gives you gas, your date will be weirded out knowing the intimate details of your intestinal system. The Wall of China was not build in one night and the trust you two build does not need to be either.

## Money Matters: To Pay or Not To Pay

The rules about who should pay are convoluted, but try to follow along:

- **The best approach is to talk about the tab when the asking happens.** "Let me take you out to dinner ... the movies ... etc." And, if you are doing the asking, you better be prepared for the paying too.
- **Give your date the opportunity to chip in if he/she wants to, but do not make them.** A good way for the non-payer to contribute is leaving the tip, buying a drink afterwards or being the driver on the date. But, if your date does not offer, then do not suggest it and just pay up.
- **People are very opinionated about this subject, so tread lightly.** If your date is insisting on paying his/her way and you are traditional and think only one person should pay, then evaluate how important your paying is to you. If you are putting your date in an uncomfortable position by not letting him/her pay, then he/she will unlikely go out with you again.
- **Make sure you know how you are handling payment before it's time to pay.** You want to avoid the silent stand-off when the check is placed on the table.
- **No matter who pays, both individuals should have money with them.** Both you and your date should have enough money—either cash or credit—to be able to cover the entire date by yourself.

*For more information,  
check out these books:*

*How to Date in a Post-dating World*  
by Diane Mapes (2006)

*The Complete Idiot's Guide to Dating*  
by Judy Kuriansky (2003)

*And for additional  
relationship articles, visit the CAPS  
Web site at [www.fit.edu/caps](http://www.fit.edu/caps)*

## Summing Up ...The Art of Dating

*Do:*

- **Put some effort into your appearance.** Shower, wash your hair, brush and floss your teeth, and dress nicely. And, if you have time, throw some breath mints into your pocket or purse.
- **Be punctual.** You look unreliable if you are late.
- **Use silverware correctly, be polite to the wait staff and tip well.** These little things can tell a date a lot about who you are, so you want to convey to them you're fantastic!
- **Relax and have fun.** Even if this person is not your soul mate, you can still have fun with him or her. Remember, the goal of a first date is just to have a good time together.
- **Ask thoughtful questions.** But never forget, you do not want your date to feel like they are on the witness stand. And, do not give away deeply personal information.
- **Accept rejection gracefully.** If your date does not want to see you again, yelling at him/her or crying hysterically in front of him/her in no way helps your cause. Yell and cry into your pillow after the date is over instead.

*Don't:*

- **Stand your date up!** Be there and be on time.
- **Wear scary clothes.** Red leather pants may not make the best impression.
- **Make fun of people with bad teeth or thick glasses.** In fact, do not make fun of people at all.
- **Order for your date.** They are big girls and boys, so they can do it by themselves.
- **Bring up your STD history, unique sexual preferences (i.e., whips and chains), commitment or marriage.** These are scary topics for the first date.
- **Talk on your cell phone** instead of talking to your date.
- **Make fun of your date.** Equally teasing each other is a fun way to get to know each other, but keep the comments very gentle.
- **Forget to bring enough money** to pay for the date.

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