

Dating

My best friend and I took two women canoeing. That summer was the worst drought in the state's history. The river was a little creek. We walked down the creek, looking at the crayfish and the minnows, pulling the canoe after us. Eventually the river deepened and we paddled through a beautiful state park.

My friend and I wore heavy sneakers. The women wore sandals. His date got leeches between her toes. I removed them with my pocketknife. My date stepped on a nail, where a farmer ran his cattle in the river. She later had to get painful tetanus shots.

Then we crossed a series of beaver dams. The beaver ponds were quagmires of mud and manure and flies. We wrestled the 17-foot aluminum canoe over each one. We got back to the car hours after dark, eaten alive by mosquitoes.

We got to know each other. We saw each other under stress. The women saw us solving problems. They saw our concern for their well-being. They saw us using muscle and determination.

My friend and his date were engaged less than a year later. My date and I were together on and off for eight years. Was it a good date or a bad date? If I'd known that there wasn't water in the river, I would've planned a different date. But the results of the date couldn't have been better.

On a date, take her outside of her normal realm.

— Ron Louis, *SEXpectations* (1997)

Emotional Range

"Emotional intelligence" isn't about controlling your emotions. It's not about substituting positive emotions for negative emotions. It's about experiencing a full range of emotions.

Civilization reduces the range of emotions you feel. In the civilized world, you never feel desperately thirsty or terrified of wild animals or hopelessly lost. But desperation resolved becomes joy. You can't feel the highest highs if you don't feel the deepest lows. The ideal date makes your partner-and you-feel a range of emotions.

Dinner-and-a-movie doesn't facilitate a range of emotions. Instead, if you're both sports fans, go to a game. Hope that your team has difficult moments, but ultimately triumphs. The ideal date is an emotional roller coaster.

Outdoor sports-skiing, hiking, rock climbing-produce a wide range of emotions. Or take your date to a hot blues club in a dangerous neighborhood. But prepare for possible dangers. Before the date, drive to the club in the daytime. Find a safe parking lot nearby. Remember how to get back to the freeway.

What to Do on a Date

Personal safety is women's priority on dates with strangers. Don't talk about violent crime, guns, terrorism, etc. Meet in a public place in a safe neighborhood. Don't suggest hiking in a remote area. If the woman has a child, don't suggest bringing the child.

The ideal first date is breakfast at a large restaurant. This is safe and requires no planning. If it's a workday, you're already dressed nicely. If you're not interested in each other, you've lost only \$15 and 45 minutes.

Don't talk about the weather, television, or work. You have only 45 minutes, so go straight to emotional connection. Ask what she's looking for in a partner. Or ask, "Women say that 'chemistry' is the most important thing in a relationship. What does 'chemistry' mean to you?"

Group Dates

The second date should be a group date. Women like group dates. Men can trade off leadership roles, putting less pressure on each man.

When the group is together, direct your conversation to a person of the opposite sex. But also include short periods of time when the men go off as a group, leaving the women together.

Play the Life Stories game. Each person has five minutes to tell her life story. Then she answers questions for five minutes. This game sounds simple, but the experience is profound. You'll be stunned at what you learn about people.

The Best Date a Man Can Take a Woman On

Lead a group date that shows off your entertainment skills. E.g., practice a cappella singing classic rock songs with two or three of your buddies. Go to coffeehouse "open mike" nights. Each of you asks a woman to watch your group perform.

Organize a group to write a humorous April Fools newsletter for your company or club.

Organize a group of friends to read a screenplay aloud. To make it more fun, have the men read the women's roles and the women read the men's roles. Find screenplays at [Script-o-rama](#)

The Best Date a Woman Can Take a Man On

Volunteer with a non-profit organization. When a man asks you out, suggest that he join you.

This tests both his commitment to you (see "Beautiful Young Women Don't Have It Easy," page 26), and his relationship skills. E.g., volunteer with Habitat For Humanity to see if he's a good worker, and gets along in a group. Volunteer with a homeless shelter to see if he can make lower-status individuals feel good about themselves (i.e., if he has ego problems). Volunteer with the Humane Society to see how he interacts with animals. Volunteer with children to see if he has good parenting skills.

Ending the Date

Ending the date first communicates that you're in control. Leave cash on the table to pay the bill, and walk her out to her car.

If you're a man, ask for a kiss. This will communicate to you whether she enjoyed the date, and if she wants to see you again.

If you ask whether she enjoyed the date, or if she wants to see you again, she'll always say "yes" (see "When "Yes" Means "No"," page 69). If you ask for a kiss and she says "no," she doesn't like you and you won't get a second date.

If she "freaks out" when you ask for a kiss, say that it's appropriate for her to thank you for asking, instead of grabbing.

Keep in mind that this is not a kiss for pleasure. A goodbye kiss is quick. Keep your tongue in your mouth. You might kiss her cheek instead of her mouth. A goodbye kiss is one kiss-not a series. Stroke her hair, not her body.

If she asks for a hug instead of a kiss, again keep it brief.

If she offers to shake hands instead, it'd be romantic to bow and kiss her hand-but practice this first!

Alcohol and Sexual Intimacy

Alcohol consumption is the strongest predictor of sexual intimacy on first dates.

On first dates without drinking, college students usually hold hands or have a casual kiss goodnight.

On first dates in which the combined drinking totals ten drinks or less, couples usually neck (prolonged kissing with close hugging) and may pet (touching the woman's breasts lightly through her clothes).

On first dates in which the couple's combined drinking totals more than ten drinks, the man usually fondles and kisses the woman's breasts. Sexual intercourse isn't unusual on first dates with heavy drinking.

Alcohol consumption during dating negatively correlates with the quality of the ensuing relationship. I.e., if you want casual sex without a relationship, drink on dates. If you want a quality relationship without casual sex, don't drink on dates.

11 Dating Mistakes Men Make

Talking About Yourself

Women dislike men who talk only about themselves. Instead of talking about how great you are, talk to make your date feel great about herself.

Going to dinner and having nothing in common but work ...entire conversation was about work or him...it didn't seem to matter what I wanted to do or what I had to say...

Talking About Facts

Don't be a know-it-all. After 14.5 years of higher education, I know enough facts to fill a factotum. And when I convey those facts to women, they say, "I'm afraid I don't have a romantic interest in our acquaintance."

Narcissism

He talked only about himself. He told me he had written a book about formerly married people. This formerly married person told me about his former marriage, about his life history, about his other books for general consumption, which all seemed to parallel his personal social and emotional history, and his other accomplishments. There wasn't a single question, and he clearly felt I should be incredibly impressed.

His whole attitude was that I was very, very, very lucky to have this great expert on positive social interactions paying attention to me, a young free-lance writer....

Finally, at about three, I said I had to go to another appointment. He was suddenly put off. He couldn't believe that a woman would leave first....He had to make the first move toward the exit. The feeling was so vivid, it was as if his beam of human energy abruptly shut off....

Later on [it was] revealed that he...had been sleeping with his clients; he had kept a whole filing cabinet full of files on other women he'd had affairs with.

— Gloria Steinem

Never date a man who writes relationship books!

Narcissus was a beautiful young man. After a tiring day of hunting, he came to a clear spring. He knelt to drink. He saw his reflection in the water. He thought that it was a beautiful water-spirit living in the spring. He fell in love with his reflection. He tried to kiss and embrace it. It fled at his touch. But soon it returned. He couldn't tear himself away. He lost all thought of food or rest while he gazed at his reflection. When he died, the gods created a purple and white flower, and named it after Narcissus.

Compare Gloria Steinem's date to Narcissus. The psychologist talked and talked, hoping to see his brilliance reflected in Steinem's awe. As long as Steinem sat still and reflected him, he felt attraction to her. But when Steinem stood to leave, she was like the rippling water of Narcissus's pool. He no longer saw his reflection in her. Her movement changed his attraction to fear.

Showing women that you're an "alpha" male-a.k.a., showing off-is a part of attracting women's attention. Continuing to show off after you attract a woman's attention is narcissism. Instead, switch gender roles and connect to her emotional state.

I guess it was with a guy that had a habit of looking into every mirror that we passed. I mean, Hello! He was worse than some girls I know!

Narcissists think they're smart and attractive. They can be charming in short-term relationships. Their need for attention can pull a partner along into the limelight. But their need to dominate leads to "game-playing, such as keeping partners uncertain about their commitment, being unfaithful and keeping secrets." Another narcissist game is thinking your time is more important than your date's. Don't squeeze your date into your busy schedule. You won't impress her. She should think that meeting her is the most important event of your day.

Showing off money-or, in this case, expensive wine-is a form of narcissism:

A bad date is anybody who arrives stoned or drunk or anyone who gets stoned or drunk while on the date. And another bad date is anyone who insists that I go dutch or pay. And another bad date is anybody who tries to kiss me, oh, before dinner. And another bad date is anybody who tries to impress me with what he knows about wines; I think that's really disgusting. And another bad date is anybody who takes you to one of those torturous, four-star restaurants where there're seventeen courses and insist you try everything. I mean that's hell.

— Rae Dawn Chong, actress

Women prefer men with lots of money, who don't make a big deal about it. Here's a man who wasn't narcissistic:

Bart showed up in a clunker car, which was quite a change from my previous boyfriend. My ex- was really into his car. He had a brand-new sports car, and at times I thought he loved his car more than me.

So here's this new guy, Bart, in a really horrid car. He parked on campus, and we were walking toward the theater, when someone yelled, "Hey! Isn't that your car?"

We looked back to see smoke billowing out of the hood. Bart just smiled and said, "I'll deal with it tomorrow," and he kept walking with me. I was blown away! I thought, "He's not overly concerned with his car! He'd rather be with me!"

The couple married. They've been together 13 years.

Inappropriate Touch

For some individuals, touch is enjoyable but "no big deal." These individuals like touching and being touched. They easily learn physical skills, e.g., skiing. Touch and physical movement makes them awake and "in the moment." In contrast, sitting in a lecture sends their minds off to dreamland. On a date, such an individual may happily respond to your touch, but don't assume that he or she wants to have sex.

To other individuals, all touch is intimate. These individuals can't stand being touched by strangers. They have difficulty learning physical skills. Auditory stimulation, e.g., a lecture or concert, makes them awake and attentive. A massage sends them off to dreamland. Movement therapy (e.g., yoga or Feldenkrais) is difficult for them, but produces deep, life-changing feelings.

When dating such an individual, keep your hands to yourself until your date trusts you. When the person is ready, your touch will make him or her feel intensely connected.

If you and your date have conflicting touch styles, discuss each other's needs. It's rude and unpleasant for a casual toucher to be "all over" a person who's sensitive to being touched. But it's equally rude for a touch-sensitive person to make his or her date sit motionless through a two-hour concert, when the date needs to dance or be touched.

To learn more about this, read *The Open Mind*, by Dawna Markova (1991).

Too Focused on Sex

The worst date I've had I would have to say was with this guy that did not understand the meaning of no. He was trying to get me to bed from the minute we met and did not let up until I pushed him out the door and locked it! Was not a pleasant experience, actually scared me, and I have found I am much more safety conscious now.

The guy assumed we were going to have sex just because we had discussed sex briefly on the phone. It was our first date! Our first meeting. I kept asking him to stop and slow down. Finally he got the point and left. Needless to say I was glad!!!

If dating were a car, the man has his hands on the steering wheel. The woman has her feet on the accelerator and brake pedals. He decides where they are going. She decides how fast.

Poor Manners

The first really big thing you learn about the guy you're dating is how he treats waiters and waitresses at a restaurant, and what a huge effect that will have on the rest of the relationship. ^[11]

— Edie Falco, who was a waitress for twenty years, and now plays Carmela Soprano on The Sopranos

Personal Hygiene

An unbearable date is one with a man who has body odor, who hasn't brushed his teeth for months, who talks about his work the whole time, or worse his mother's cooking.

When I'm flatulent at a party, I find the worst-dressed guy and stand next to him.

"Dutch Treat"

A blind date...was highly respectable and highly thought of by my friend. He was (I guess still is) a therapist. He called and we discussed meeting for coffee at a neutral place in the daytime. He was insistent on going out to dinner, that our first date should be a dinner date. He asked me to dinner and he insisted on picking me up at my home. Against my better judgment I consented even though my co-worker assured me he was a "stand up guy" and "okay." We go to dinner and at the end of the meal when the check comes he tallies up what "I owe" and hands me the bill and asked for the money. He told me that every woman he dates pays her own way.

The guy was late picking me up. When he showed up, he looked like he had slept in his clothes. He informed me that we had to take my car because his was in the shop. After dinner, he couldn't pay the bill, and asked if he could borrow the money to pay it. I took him to his place and he tried to get me to stay the night with him. I finally told him where to go, in a polite way.

Any first date that involved coupons.

Too Disorganized

Showing up late, not having dinner reservations or theater tickets, having car trouble-not being in control of your basic life stuff won't get you points.

Too Organized

But being too organized can be as bad:

He had everything planned and rehearsed and nothing goes right...ugh!
When we were late for any planned event that day, she lost it.

Plan the date, but plan options for your date to choose. Suggest two restaurants, or two movies you'd like to

see. Let her choose. If the weather is bad on your hiking trip, have a museum to visit. Spontaneity is romantic.

Violence and Physical Abuse

I had a man that hit me on our first date and that didn't fly at all with me. Let's just say I dropped him off 30 min from his house out in the middle of nowhere. I felt kinda bad, but he hit me so I felt kinda justified.

Out to dinner, date gets drunk, starts fight with stranger, got shot at, and windows busted out of car with bumper jack.

4 Dating Mistakes Women Make

Lying About Boyfriends, Jealous Ex's

The worst date must have been the time her boyfriend showed up at the dinner table. Honestly, I didn't know he existed before the date. Machismo is really funny sometimes. Fortunately, I can laugh about it now. It was probably the closest I've ever come to having someone really kick my butt.

Went out to eat, saw a movie. Then dropped her off, she was tired....As I left her ex-boyfriend pulled up and went inside. The next day I walked by (she was my neighbor) and he was still there. Did not make me feel so good about the date when I saw her that afternoon and she had several fresh hickies on her neck.

I had a date set for a week. We went out. It felt really weird during the date. Afterwards, she told me that she got back with her ex the day before. She still went out with me because she didn't want to break my heart. (Go figure.)

Her "old boy friend" smashed a wooden chair on my back during dinner. But that's not what made it so crappy. She went home with the guy cause I wouldn't "fight" for her.

Women lie about boyfriends. Men lie about wives.

Standing Up Dates

Stood up at the last minute to a Rolling Stones concert.

Getting stood up trying one of those dating services.

I showed up at her door as she was going out with friends. She had forgot all about our date.

Getting stood up is one of the most common complaints from men about women. I've heard no complaints from women about getting stood up by men.

Tell dates to meet you at your office or home. Your date can be late-or not show up at all-and you haven't been inconvenienced.

Negative, Demanding, Critical

I went out with a woman who was so negative that it ruined my night.

A woman who is not an upbeat person.

It was a night of hell while I went from bar to bar spending my money on a person I did not want to be with. Most demanding person I have ever met too, demanded drinks, demanded food, demanded everything.

Feminine individuals (including feminine men) do picky complaining. Masculine individuals (including masculine women) look for something positive to say about suboptimal situations.

Theft

She stole my wallet, clothes, and car.
She stole your clothes? I'd like to hear her side of the story.

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