



## **ONLINE DATING**

**Using online dating sites can be a great way to meet many people without having to resort to the bar scene. In fact, many people who have a history of being in an abusive relationship find history repeating itself using online dating.**

There are seven steps you should know about before you start using online dating to look for a better half online.

### Step 1

Choose a reputable dating website with built-in safety features. Safe dating websites screen their users, and some even offer free telephone services to contact dates without revealing your cell or home number.

### Step 2

Set up an anonymous email account to reply to your online dating ad responses. If an online suitor turns out to be a creep, you don't want him stalking you through the email address you've had for 10 years.

### Step 3

Make your online profile intriguing but vague. Keep identifying features like your address and phone number private. Posting a head shot instead of a full-body shot heightens mystery and lessens the chances of inadvertently appearing too sexual.

#### Step 4

Meet in a public place. Tell friends and family where you're going and what time you expect to return.



#### Step 5

Consider double-dating for the first few dates. Make sure the other couple includes at least one of your friends so you can get an opinion of your date's disposition from someone who cares about you.

#### Step 6

Stay sober on your dates. It's tempting to consume a few drinks to alleviate first-date jitters, but drinking alcohol reduces your ability to respond if a date turns sour.

#### Step 7

Steer clear of married people on dating websites. If a married person seeks an online date, she's/he's already bringing an element of deceit to a new relationship that can predict other problems.

## **A few keys to communicating effectively on a date**

Consider if it moves too fast, too soon, it's a con. Emotions run high and our inhibitions are lower when meeting people online, so it's not unusual for daters to begin to feel strong emotions very soon into the relationship, sometimes even before you meet.

If there is talk of marriage or combining homes, you may be dealing with someone who is getting ready to steal not just your heart, but your bank account as well.

Know that if you can't get a straight answer to questions about their past, you may be dealing with an online dating con man. Vague personal history usually means that the person is hiding something from you.

Do a background check by going online and inserting your date's name and birth date into a criminal background checking website or a state's court website. Really suspicious?

Spend a little money and pay for an online background check. Remember, this only works if your date has given you his correct name and birth date.

Be aware that if she brags about her finances but needs to borrow money, you are dealing with a con man. Excuses about unexpected expenses or losses won't explain a vast difference in income and you should never loan money to a virtual stranger, no matter how strong your feelings for them. This is a big red flag.

Consider that if the age they say they are doesn't seem right to you, check it out further. Try to get a look at his driver's license and do an online search for his name and birth date to see if it's a match.

A little white lie about age doesn't mean much, but a lie about a birth date may mean he has a criminal past or outstanding warrants.

Look at multiple social security numbers. He may explain it away as due to being a victim of identity theft, but ask a few more questions. If he is a victim, he will have documentation to prove that, otherwise, he is a criminal.

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