



5 Secrets to Make Online Dating Work for You

Make Sorting and Screening Potential Partners Work for You

You've posted your profile. You are getting responses and you are ready to make contact with potential matches. First you need an online dating strategy with an action plan to keep you on track.

Consistently log in

Set aside a certain amount of time each day to check your inbox, search profiles and send messages. Being online frequently shows that you are an active member and more likely to receive messages. If someone has been off the site for more than a week it's possible they won't return.

Create filters on the search page

For a search based site begin by browsing the broadest range of characteristics that you are looking for, allowing you to view a large group of potential matches. This could include a thirty mile radius from your residence, a fifteen year age span, etc.

For an algorithm site begin by browsing the narrowest range of characteristics that you're looking for, allowing you to maximize the limited number of results you receive. For each trait, the site will usually ask how important it is to you. If you indicate that it's not important, the site will broaden the search. Check only the types you are open to and note that it's extremely important so that the algorithm stays within your parameters. If you start to notice patterns of matches outside your parameters it is time to adjust your filters. It is a good idea to edit your filter about once a month. For example by changing your age range you will see new people.

Read their content carefully

By paying close attention to how they describe themselves and the tone used you can learn a lot about their level of integrity and honesty. Also, note their description of the ideal match. If's it's longer than their personal description it may be an unrealistic laundry list of a fictional character on the other hand if it's extremely short they may be clueless to what they are looking for in a relationship.

Look at their photos carefully

You can learn a lot about someone by looking at their photos beyond whether or not you find them attractive. How do they present themselves? What does their attire say about them? What activities are they engaged in? Is there a lack of photos? If so, do they explain it?

Scouting

Use a scouting strategy to quickly determine if someone you see online is someone that you would like to get to know. Review your relationship requirements, needs and deal breakers, and keep them handy through the process. You may want to put profiles into two categories:

- A. He or she seems to have every single quality I'm looking for.
- B. He or she seems to have some of the qualities I'm looking for.

Keep an open mind to the fact that people on your A list may seem wonderful on paper but may lack chemistry in person. And people on your B list may have the most hidden potential. It's important to not eliminate someone too quickly and risk passing over your ideal match.

Save your searches

Saving your search criteria will help you to be more efficient in future searches. It will allow you to search all of the page results of a specific group of singles before moving onto the next group. .

Update your profile

When you update your profile the dating site will automatically send you to the top of people's search results. You can do this by making small edits to your text or by alternating two or three pictures.

Search new members

If you continuously see the same matches, check out the new members. Most sites will tell you who their newest members are.

Stay open to the process of scouting whether dating online or off. Dating is a process with a beginning (looking for someone), a middle (finding someone) and an end (keeping someone).

My client, Rick was true blue to the concept of staying with the process, even when the chips are down. His criteria filters were so narrow that he didn't get any matches for two months. Once we broadened his criteria filters his inbox filled and his dating journey began.

Screening

One evening as you are sitting at your computer someone of interest catches your eye and you would like to send them an email to see if there is any potential. You may be wondering where to begin and how will I know.

We'll use a process called screening to gather enough information to determine if someone meets your requirements or not. We will apply this through emails and a face to face meeting. Being the successful single you are means being assertive, patient, having boundaries and maintaining them, being realistic/practical and that you do not get involved with anyone that does not appear to meet all of your relationship requirements.

Your first email

Your first email is the equivalent of a first encounter, so take your time to compose it. Write an email specifically for him or her, and then ask a question. Questions show that you have genuine interest in getting to know someone and really begin the conversation. Start by reading their profile to get specifics about common interests and pay attention for any red flags. A

common interest is a great topic for a first email. OkCupid's email study showed phrases that are likely to get responses are "Curious what..." and "Noticed that ..."

Subject line

Select a subject title that is click worthy, something with a little personality and avoid titles that are dry or generic.

Content

In composing the email content many online sites recommend to jump right in and skip the salutation for a better open rate. Using proper grammar and sentence structure is a must. The best length is usually three or four sentences- anything longer could make you appear over anxious. Ask one question at the end of the message.

Always use your username to close. It adds warmth and a personal feel to a digital correspondence.

Replies

Reply to their response in a timely manner, no 3 day rules apply to chatting online. Just as when you're chatting in person you want to keep the momentum going in a getting-to-know-you direction. This means showing interest by asking one or two questions. Some topics to avoid are; sex, politics, religion (unless it is a nice dating site geared to religion), and past relationships. Begin the sorting process by learning about their level of compatibility with your requirements and values. Notice how they respond. If you feel they could have potential and want to know more after about 6 messages it's time to get offline and set a meeting. Guys, do not fear rejection and ask her for a meeting. It's highly unlikely that she will say no since you have already communicated back and forth. If asking is difficult, try ending a statement about a meeting. Then ask what works best for her. Ladies, do not be afraid to take matters into your own hands if he hasn't asked and you want to set up a meeting. You can mention a current event that you have in common and offer to meet him there. You can mention the upcoming weekend and ask what he's up to. If all else fails, just go for it and tell him that you would love to meet.

If your potential match says that he or she has a conflict, keep the conversation going in the meantime. Just be sure to ask him or her to set a date. While this may seem a bit forward, - if someone isn't willing to meet you there is no reason to continue to communicate. It's better to find this out sooner rather than later.

If you notice inconsistencies or inaccurate information from their profile to their emails you will want to get more facts. Asking questions in a genuinely interested way will garner the best results. So think carefully before hitting the send button. You could approach the subject in question with a personal story and invite them to do likewise. It could be an honest mistake or a big red flag that they are dishonest or hiding something.

Meeting face to face

Going from online to offline is going to be different. You have to get off-line for those sparks to fly, but don't let the prospect of that first meeting daunt you. It's just a meeting, a chance to see if there might be something there – it's not a date. Remembering that will help keep anxiety levels low and expectations realistic.

Before we get into the details, I must, as any good dating coach worth her salt would, mention a few safety precautions. Although you may already have these in mind, a little reminder is worthwhile. Some online daters have a false sense of security because they have already been communicating with someone for a while. But don't forget that even though you have chatted online or maybe talked on the phone, you are meeting a complete stranger and should proceed accordingly. Meet in a public place, where there are lots of people around. Tell your friends or family who you are going to meet, where and when, and give them a call after the meeting. Plan on a short introduction meeting of 30 to 60 minutes. Have your withdrawal strategy ready, if needed.

There are some things to think about as you prepare to take online to the new – offline-level. Although your first meeting will be short, and is not a romantic rendezvous, you still want to make a great first impression. Bring the best version of you. Ladies, wear something you love that loves you back by accentuating your best assets. Guys, wear a nice shirt that matches your eyes or shows off your hours at the gym. And by all means bring your high energy and an open mind. You have seen pictures of each other online but the real live version is bound to be different. I am not trying to scare, just remind you that a picture is, by definition, artificial and in

most cases idealized. We all choose the most flattering images of ourselves to share publicly. Have realistic expectations.

A great way to feel well-prepared for first contact is to re-read the profile of the person you are meeting. Doing so will help remind you of his or her interests and activities, which will be useful as conversation starters. Simply be curious. Listen more than you speak, at least at first, and let the conversation take on a life of its own. Many first offline meetings start out slowly and that's okay. If the goal is to discover whether there is something about this person worth pursuing, possibly to a first date, there is value to giving time and attention to the little things. Knowing what you want and need in a relationship will keep your expectations in check and avoid possible disappointments.

So, you've arrived at your meeting armed with information, feeling good about yourself. A greeting is in many ways the simplest thing in the world but can seem overwhelming under these circumstances, which despite the popularity of online dating, still seem contrived. You know the person to an extent, yet have never met. So it is natural to have some preconceptions and ideas about how things might go. But *don't*. Just keep it simple. Eye contact. A smile. An open and friendly expression. Whereas a handshake is a little too formal, a hug may be premature. Go with the energy in the moment, the priceless smile and a simple, "Hello."

Now for conversation. The more you practice, the more at ease and confident you'll be. To decide what questions to ask or topics to discuss consider what your requirements, needs and wants are in a relationship. Also, know what you want to share. Keep in mind that the meeting is to determine if this is someone you would like to spend more time with.

Breaking the ice. Keep conversation light and upbeat. Chances are you both are a little nervous, so a light, even humorous, conversation is the best way to start out. An easy way to build a connection is to talk about a topic that you can both relate to. It could be a current event or swapping funny online dating experiences. It is not the time to talk about your ex, problems at work, your health or anything else "heavy." You should have fun talking with your date even if you pre-plan some topics.

Exploration. Getting to know your date. By now you've had at least one phone conversation. Maybe you remember movies or hobbies he or she mentioned during the call? Or favorite music, or being a pet owner? If so, you can start a conversation with questions:

- “What did you like about that movie? Who was in it?”
- “How did you become interested in your hobby?”
- “What type of music do you love most?”
- “Tell me about your pet.”

Follow up questions show engagement, and have the added benefit of accelerating your discovery of common ground you might share.

If you are looking for a committed long term relationship, ask questions that gently probe to assess if that interest is shared.

- “What are you most passionate about in life?”
- “What are your goals for the next ten years?”
- “Do you believe in happily ever after?”
- “What brings you the most pleasure?”

Avoid overly-intense queries that might seem scary on a first meeting, such as, “When can I see you next?” or “Would you like to meet my children?” If you sense the person is uncomfortable at any time, back off. Also, mixing in lighthearted conversation with questions will eliminate the feeling of an interview. Listen sincerely and attentively. Give him or her ample room to talk. Doing so shows that you are interested in the conversation and want to hear more.

Personal anecdotes. It is just as important to share about yourself as to find out about your potential match. Telling a funny story from work that reveals something about the way you interact with people can be enlightening. Talking about a favorite vacation can be insightful for both parties as your date can learn about you and may share a love of traveling as well. As you share stories about yourself, avoid mention of an ex (even if a trip was or a hobby or interest was shared with one), and stick to upbeat, lighthearted anecdotes, avoiding the overly dramatic or painful.

Sharing yourself also gives your potential match an opportunity to ask *you* questions. Do not deflect those questions, even if you are shy to talk about yourself. The goal here is to get to know one another, so be open and honest. Finding a balance between how much to talk and how much to listen is challenging. Keeping tuned in to body language is part of knowing if you

are hitting it right. If your date pulls back, glances away from you more than is normal or starts saying, “Uh huh” a lot, shift the focus.

When it is time to leave, exit gracefully. Having plans afterward, even if it's to let the dog out, will help you disengage. And even if things are going very well, disengage you must. This is just step one. Stick to your plan. As you prepare to leave, say thank you for meeting. If you had a good time in one another's company and are open to a date, say so.

What next? Once you have met your online connection in person, there is no going back to communicating on the dating site. For one thing, you have taken the connection to the next level and waiting for him or her to be signed on again is too unpredictable. An email, text or good ol' fashioned phone call is best. If this contact is a person of interest, you should be well on your way to a first date. If not, this is where the communication stops.

No matter what the outcome of this first face-to-face, stay committed to the process of dating, keep your goal in mind and be open. Doing so will allow more opportunities to present themselves, and somewhere out there is your ideal match!

EXERCISE

Scouting:

Log in schedule

Day and time _____

Create filters for characteristics that you are looking for

Broad _____

Narrow (for algorithm sites) _____

Read their content and look at their photos carefully

Observations _____

List potential match profiles into two categories

A-Yes _____

B-Maybe _____

Save your searches on the site _____

Update your profile weekly _____

Select 2 or 3 pictures and edit text _____

Search new members _____

Screening

Compose first email

Subject line

Reply

Set meeting

Place and time_____

Safety precautions_____

Exit strategy_____

Prepare to make a great first impression

Re-read profile for conversation topics

Enjoy the moment
