



5 Secrets to Make Online Dating Work for You

Make the First Date Work for You

You met someone online, decided to take it offline, did your preliminary screening meeting and are now going on your first official date. Then the nervousness sets in; what to wear? Where to go? How to act? What to say? Why am I so anxious? Believe me, even people with the healthiest feeling of self-confidence feel nervous before a first date. Let's do a little prep work to lower your anxiety and raise your self-confidence

Confidence. We know what it looks like and feels like in ourselves and others. You may well be confident in your career, as a parent, pursuing your favorite hobbies, but confidence in one area does not guarantee confidence across the board. For many seeking a new relationship, it's not easy to feel a whole lot of self-assurance. Maybe you have been hurt, or experienced a failed relationship you thought would last. Even though you finally feel "over it," and know what your requirements, wants and needs are in a relationship, you freeze when it's show time. Don't let a lack of confidence in the dating arena do a number on your confidence!

There are some very concrete things you can do right now to build up your dating confidence. Take these tips to heart and your heart will be fortified!

1. Make a list. Literally—on a piece of paper. This list will enumerate all the good qualities that make you YOU. Your talents (you can cook/write/dance/tie flies!). Your accomplishments (you built a treehouse out of twigs/founded an internet business/have a pilot's license/sewed the curtains in your dining room!). Your special traits (you laugh till you cry/listen well/have an optimistic attitude!). Acknowledge the good in yourself. Why is this so hard for people to do? I don't know, but it is. Step back from yourself and

look at who you are from as objective a viewpoint as you can manage. Impressive, aren't you? When you see the good in yourself, others will as well.

2. Make another list. On this list will be all the wonderful things you can bring to a relationship. Appreciate your hard won wisdom and patience, your excellent listening skills, and your willingness to co-create a love-filled life with someone special. Realize one very important thing: you are *quite* a catch!
3. Trust yourself to know when to say "no." You can and will say no to what you don't want. Being assertive is not being aggressive, it is merely saying you can't or won't do something. Assertiveness raises self-confidence and lowers anxiety and thus will empower you!
4. Look at yourself in the mirror. Seeing yourself is not the same as picking yourself apart. That person you see is the perfect YOU. Stop overanalyzing your physical attributes and perceived "flaws." You did an objective assessment and perhaps opted for an updated hair style and bought clothes that accentuate your assets and represent the real you. Good. Move on and walk the walk of your brilliant authentic self!

True confidence is self-acceptance, self-assurance and self-love. Your wisdom, your life experiences, your goals, your special heart—these things are worth feeling good about. Your acceptance of yourself will be evident in the self-assured manner with which you present yourself to the world. That is you. That is confidence.

Now that your dating confidence is in check let's look at how body language can support you on the first date.

Body Language

Somewhere along the line, psychologists figured out that there was this thing they called "body language"—a non-verbal form of communication that your body knows all about, and that you probably don't. You "speak" body language all the time without thinking about it, knowing it or having any idea of what the heck you are saying to anyone and everyone who just looks at you!

Your body language is a very real language indeed. It is expressive and subtle, can convey more in a moment than hours of conversation could, and it starts talking before you open your mouth. Body language is a more accurate communicator than words can ever be. In fact, it is believed that only 19% of what you communicate to others is done through the spoken word; the rest is expressed by the body's language and by tone of voice.

Given those facts, is it any wonder that emails and text messages can so quickly go off the rails? We depend on unconscious signals such as posture, facial expression, physical actions and vocal tone to give us over three quarters of our information! For someone looking for a relationship or in the process of fanning the new flames of one, all those non-verbal cues indicate what you want and what you offer. Did you know that you may be presenting to prospective matches that you are, in fact, closed to their advances

A simple conversation can be fraught with mixed signals. You might be saying, "Would you like to sit down and continue this conversation?" but your body is saying, "I am afraid and shy so you probably should go talk to someone else." It's no wonder that many singles are confused about what other singles are *really* thinking or feeling. Projecting the right nonverbal information to reflect your intentions can make the difference between the right impression and the wrong one.

And lucky for you, not all body language is unconscious. You can communicate using your facial expressions and body in a very conscious and intentional way, as well as stop yourself when you are about to let things "slip" in a non-verbal conversation! To do so, practice being more mindful of the signals you are giving off with your body language. Here are some tips to help you send non-verbal messages that reflect your *real* intentions:

1. **Open up.** Open body language says that you are interested. It includes smiling, standing tall with head high, comfortable posture, arms relaxed, leaning forward, directly facing the person you are speaking to, nodding, and smiling some more. It is contagious! The more self-assured and open you appear, the more others will feel invited in. They will feel safe to approach you, and what is more important, they will really want to! An open

posture conveys self-confidence, and remember, self confidence is sexy.

What to avoid: Closed body language such as folded arms, hunched shoulders, lowered head, body angled away, or forbidding expressions such as a frown. These messages are like a huge “Shop Closed” sign for anyone and everyone who might have wanted to approach you!

2. **Eye contact.** Though often easier said than done, it is vital that you look directly into the eyes of the person you’re speaking with. Doing so shows that you are interested in that person and in what he or she is saying. Eye contact communicates honesty and sincerity like nothing else and works like a magnet to draw people to you.

What to avoid: Looking down or shifting your eyes elsewhere, even if you are nervous. Avoiding eye contact sends a message of lack of interest, discomfort, desire to avoid interaction and dishonesty. Even if none of that is true, you could inadvertently communicate something that will sabotage your best intentions!

3. **Touch.** Physical contact is simply the most powerful and the easiest form of body language to use. It is important to use touch perceptively and sensitively. Used effectively, it packs a big punch (pun intended) in a soft, meaningful and impressive way. By observing and mirroring someone’s body language you will be able to determine what kind of touch is appropriate. This can be where the sparks begin!

What to avoid: Touching someone who is sending clear signals not to do so! Be sensitive to the non-verbal messages *you* are getting!

4. **Head to toe.** Part of body language is the whole gamut of subtle clues embedded in your general outward appearance. How you wear your hair, make-up (for gals) and clothing communicate non-verbally who you are and how you show up in the world. Be conscious that what is on the outside matches what is on the inside, such as your intentions. What message do you want to send?

What to avoid: Insensitivity to setting and context when planning your attire or general

appearance. For example, business attire at a social event may project stuffiness while scant clothing may convey an image of promiscuity.

Being aware that your voluntary body language often speaks louder than your words can make a big difference when it comes to meeting and engaging with new people. Matching your physical actions with your intentions is key to successful non-verbal communication. By mastering your body language you can become an irresistible magnet and attract your true love.

So far we have discussed dating confidence and body language, now let's move on to some good ol' fun flirting techniques.

Flirting

Flirting is as much a way of being as it is a way of doing. Three parts mindset; one part action. What's lessons can we learn from a grade-A flirt? He or she is open and receptive, generous and giving, and a little vulnerable. And remember, it takes confidence to be vulnerable.... Flirting is all about the part of you that wants to have fun, and is ready to say: "Wanna come out and play?"

Let's do some visualization to get you in the right frame to mind. Think of someone you know—someone who may be interested in you already. Close your eyes. Imagine that person standing beside you now, looking at you with interest. Be open to it. Envision a lively conversation filled with a strong emotional connection. This person clearly gets you and likes what he—or she—is hearing. Next add subtle yet stimulating body language and you have a recipe for successful flirting.

The great thing about flirting is that it can happen anywhere, any time. You don't need to put it in your calendar or set aside time for it. Nor do you ever cross it off your list. It can be part of your day, spontaneously, and happen over and over with anyone. Someone you have met for the first time, a new romantic interest you have just started dating – and even folks who have been married for years. Anyone can flirt! And what, you may ask, is the point of flirting? Well, it's fun, for one thing. But it has an important role to play in relationships. Flirting shows that you like someone and that you find him or her interesting and attractive. Today, tomorrow, or in fifty years.

Flirting is a spirited game between two people and you don't want to miss out on the fun just because you are not sure how to play. First of all, make sure you can read the signals. If you are not sure you can, practice. Look around you at other people to see if you can tell when active flirting is going on. If you know but are not sure why, analyze what small gestures, actions or words clue you in that they are being flirtatious.

Then you can take note of your own interactions with others. Do you flirt without realizing it? Are you shy or do you feel awkward? There are some tips below that can help you get in the swing of it. But remember, if you are having fun flirting but realize you are not really that into each other, exit graciously and immediately. Remember, if your best flirt doesn't seem to land well for someone, you are not being rejected, it's simply that what you are offering doesn't fit what they are looking for at the moment. A person can easily decline a great flirt or romantic advances for logical reasons (geography or schedules), or illogical reasons (hair color or the Zodiac) or for no reason at all. Do not take it personally. You have nicer people to meet.

Now...let the games begin

1. **Smile.** It gets them every time. It may seem obvious to you now, but you would be surprised at how many people, in the moment, forget the value of a smile that goes all the way to the eyes. Even if you are nervous, bring on the smile, make eye contact, say hello and introduce yourself.
2. **Body language.** Use it. Refer to the above notes.
3. **Physical contact.** Now I don't mean you have to side-tackle the person from across the room so you can help him or her up off the floor and thus start a conversation.... Though that would be very innovative, I'm really talking about the perceptive and sensitive use of touch. Physical contact is simply the most powerful flirting tool. A hand placed briefly on a man's arm, for example, or at the small of a woman's back as you move to take a seat. By observing and mirroring someone's body language you will be able to determine what kind of touch is appropriate.
4. **Talk.** Obvious, right? But very hard for some. You are not reciting your résumé or giving your life story, chapter and verse. This is just flirting, remember. So start an easy conversation. It's fine to talk about yourself –maybe tell a funny anecdote, something

that happened at work or on line at CVS. Or you can talk about what is going on around you at the time. Ask open ended questions; “What do you think of the band? What’s your favorite music?” Listen to what they say and adjust the conversation accordingly.

5. **Give a sincere compliment.** Emphasis on sincere. Try to find an attribute that the person you are talking with seems most proud of and mention that. It could be looks (“You have the cutest smile”), clothes (“Your shirt brings out the blue in your eyes”), or hair (“Your hair style is very becoming”).

When you are flirting, show your confidence and you will be enticing and sexy. If flirting is fun for you, it will be fun for the other person as well. Then the act of flirting is desirable, and so, by extension, are you!

Bring the best version of you to every date. Projecting a positive attitude and good energy will help you look, feel and be your best, not to mention make a huge impression on your date.

Know that a date is a social event and dress accordingly. Wear something that you love and that reflects your unique personality. Women, feminine is best. Wear that flirty little skirt that reveals just enough to be interesting while maintaining some mystery. Or something soft, or colorful, or simply delicious. Whatever you choose, it ought to show your best features to good advantage! Men, wear the shirt that accentuates your fine qualities, whether through a flattering color or a cut that reveals the results of your hours at the gym.

Engage in light-hearted conversation as you are getting to know your date better. Listen more than you talk and show genuine interest in what your date is saying, through good eye contact and open body language. Be in the moment and allow the conversation to have a life of its own. Discuss topics of mutual interest that don’t veer towards the overly personal. Make the best of this chance to “read” your date for what captures his or her attention. At the end of the date, if you had a good time, say so, thus sending a clear message that you are open for a second date. In fact, if you are so inclined, this is an opportune moment to ask for a second date.

Rest assured: getting the second date that you want isn’t difficult. Being prepared with the right mindset and some excellent first-date skills will increase your chances of having a second shot at romance. And most importantly: relax. Your anxiety is telegraphed to everyone around you. Just enjoy the process of getting to know new people on your dating journey. Remember the

odds – for every first date you go on, you are getting closer to a second, and ultimately to the relationship you desire.

EXERCISE

Confidence

List all the good qualities that make you You

Talents _____

Accomplishments _____

Acknowledge the good in you _____

List all the wonderful things you bring to a relationship _____

Trust yourself to know when to say no

Write your relationship physical and emotional boundaries _____

Practice body language techniques (look in the mirror)

- Open up
- Good eye contact
- Consider your comfort level of physical touch
- Practice flirting
- Smile
- Physical touch
- Conversation
- Bring the best version of you

Attitude

Physical Appearance