

# The new rules of online dating

It's now taboo if you *don't* try it. Here, the people behind the sites reveal what really works



## PICTURE QUALITY, NOT CONTENT, COUNTS

A few years ago, profile-picture advice was all about poses and facial expressions. But this was a time when a slightly blurry shot of a guy in his bathroom mirror was still passable. Today? Treat your profile like your Instagram. “Mobile daters are accustomed to seeing high-quality images – so use the same techniques you would for social media: a cool Instagram filter or an editing app, such as Snapseed or Instafish,” says Sarah Gooding, dating coach for plentyoffish.com, which has 70 million users worldwide.

## DON'T JUST USE ONE SITE

There used to be this crazy fear about switching dating sites: what would happen if someone from site one saw you on site two and realised you STILL HADN'T MET ANYONE? Yeah, it's silly – and a paranoia that's long gone. “There are now 1,400 dating sites in the UK,” says Brett Harding, co-founder of lovestruck.com, a site that introduces people in the same city. “Register for at least three, gauge interest, then part with your cash on the ones you like.”

## CHECK HOW YOUR DATA IS USED

Because your profile could end up in more places than you think – particularly if you join a niche site. “People are often unaware that they're joining a bigger network of dating sites,” explains Lucy Reeves, co-founder of muddymatches.co.uk, which matches by your preference for city or country life. “Often, only in the T&Cs will there be a clause saying, ‘By registering with (site name), any content that you post may be searchable and available to users on other websites.’ It means your profile could appear elsewhere, and the people you're seeing may not have actually joined your site (so may not be as like-minded as you hoped).” Last year, the Online Dating Association was set up to give dating sites a code of conduct to adhere to; if you have a concern about a site you're using, they can point you in the right direction of where to complain.

## BAN GENERAL PHRASES

We might be masters of self-publicity on CVs and social media, but selling yourself romantically can still feel a marketing step too far. So it's easy to opt for the old generics of, ‘I'm easy-going’, ‘I love socialising’. The problem? There's too much competition for that to cut it. “Consider what makes you different,” says Karl Gregory, MD of match.com in the UK and Ireland. “Use buzzwords that stand out – for example, place names, film titles, football teams – whatever will make someone linger.”

## IT'S ABOUT LOVE AND NETWORKING

Thanks particularly to dating apps, you can now date every night (and lunchtime, should you wish). But this conveyor-belt speed is changing the end goal of meet-ups. “App-based dating isn't always a quest for Mr Right; it's increasingly a way to meet connections,” says Rosette Pambakian, director of communications at Tinder. “A not-so-successful date could become a significant friendship or business contact. If you're uncertain where you stand, just ask – it's really just about dating honestly.”