

HELP!

**I'M A
NERVOUS
WRECK**



**ESSENTIAL ADVICE *BEFORE* YOU
ASK A GIRL OUT AND MESS UP!**



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INTRODUCTION

Not one of us has gone unscathed from and by the custom of dating. It does not matter what culture, gender or age, dating has had an impact upon us in some form or other. We see examples of it on the television, read about it in magazines and learn about it in the classroom, locker room and on the street. Sociologists study it as do psychologists, behaviorists, educators and biologists.

The subject is pervasive. Dating with all its foibles is regular fodder for movies and television series. Books extol the art of dating and/or finding your "soul mate". The ideology of romantic love, "true love" and the "ideal mate" are expounded page after page or in scene after scene. According to this approach, the first date is the start of this journey. In many movies and pulp fiction, the first date is where the hero and heroine start-off on their journey into the ultimate adventure of eternal happiness.

This quest for eternal happiness is not a modern dilemma. It dates back centuries. It is part of many different philosophical approaches to life. Dating, however, is a new phenomenon. It is only around a century old. It is an evolutionary process affected by technological and sociological changes. Dating has to do with relationships and experimentation. It concerns the search for economic, societal and emotional security. It is about compromise and expansion. It is also, believe it or not, fun.

Dating is amusing and daunting. It is scary and exciting. It can be an adventure or a calamity. In fact, sometimes, it can be a bit of both. In the search for the ideal date, you are bound to make a few mistakes. Relax. Everybody does. It is rare to find exactly who you want to be with on your first outing. Think of it as a learning experience, a great adventure, time well spent. Certainly, it is more interesting than watching the news, although it can sometimes feel you may soon be on it as you are quickly becoming part of a train wreck.

Depending upon your point of view, dating is either easier or harder as you get older. This is an e-book geared towards the mature male. It is a guide to dating. Are you curious about arranging that first date on an online dating service? Perhaps, you are looking to date a single mom. Maybe you, yourself, are a single father or are you a senior? This e-book hopes to help you be successful in obtaining that first date. It looks at means to make your first date, great. First, however, let's start with a definition and a brief history lesson. What is dating and when did it all begin?

1

TALKING ABOUT ALL GENERATIONS

DEFINITION

Dating is a simple sounding word. It consists of two syllables dāt and ĩng. The origins of the word lie in the Latin language – data/dare to give. The basis of the current usage, however, began in the United States. It is now universal in its application as an informal term describing making an appointment or assignation with a member of the opposite sex. Dating is the action of going out with another person, either as a romantic or social partner. A date is now an appointment or engagement with the specific idea of going out socially. A date is also the word you apply to the person who is accompanying you on this specific outing.

This concept of “dating” someone is new in terms of historical developments. While it does have predecessors in the form of courtship and courting, dates and dating are products of the early 20th century. It is an evolutionary if not revolutionary step in the establishing of relationships between the sexes set into motion by the fallout from and advancements made in World War I.

HISTORY

Prior to the development of “dating,” young people and adults met at socially acceptable venues. They socialized at Church and were introduced at dances. They met at local functions such as fairs, hunts and fields. Large family gatherings were the perfect times for people to meet. Christmas was one such time. Many families exchanged gifts and visited each other’s homes. The young people met in supervised situations, bargains were struck between the parents and events proceeded from there.

Courting was all about finding a mate. It meant commitment and marriage. Marriage from the earliest times was always the final product of two people courting. Absent was the modern concept of true love. Marriage rarely relied on concepts of love and soul mates. It was an economic and social contract between two people. It was for the betterment of their lives and that of their families.

The family played an integral role in all marriages. It did not matter whether you were upper, middle, working or lower class. Marriage was the ultimate goal – a goal in which you strived to improve your lot in life and, therefore, the lot of your family.

For some, it meant an improvement in their social status; for others, it was the uniting of two families for political and economic reasons. Some parents gained a direct and immediate benefit through either selling their daughter into marriage or procuring a dowry or dowry price. Even when the Victorians began to finalize the concept of a woman's proper sphere and a male's role in society, the rationale behind courtship remained – marriage with the accompanying economic and or social betterment. No matter who you were, you did not want to "marry down". While it may be romantic to fall in love with some one of a different class, it was never realistic to expect it to work in real life.

The position of parents on the importance of marriage did not change over the 19th century. Marriage was the only possible outcome of courtship. What did vary was the amount of direct supervision of the two young people. Until the 1830s, the shape of courtship remained less rigid. While the role of the parents was always strong, their children had more freedom of movement than in successive generations. In part, this was the result of increased implementation of a gender-specific view of men and women's roles. As the Victorian Age took hold, women assumed a very strict position within society. It was a view that held them to be naïve, innocent, chaste and innocent (i.e. stupid or uninformed) in the ways of the world. Men were morally corrupt and given over to fleshly desires. A strong woman had to restrain and retrain his manly urges. Nevertheless, remaining consistent in this stricter form of gendered society were the goals of courtship: marriage and children, economic and social status.

At the back of these Victorian concepts were the parents. They held a very formal role. They supervised all aspects of the courtship. Duennas or parental supervision was at an all time high. While courtship was intended to end with marriage, it could not do so if the parents refused your suit. The young man did not ask the object of his affections for her hand in marriage. He turned to the parents, particularly the father. During this era, the father had control of the family. This was firmly ensconced in the legal system. The father was the owner of everything. His wife and his children were his property.

The arrival of the industrial revolution in the 19th century began to alter the overall concept of courtship in specific ways. Technology began to liberate women. It sent them off into the factories. It created new classes of people. This included the poor woolen factory girls as well as a white-collar group of clerks, secretaries and telephone operators. Many of these jobs became female ghettos. Nevertheless, the arrival of this type of work liberated many girls and men from some of the formalities of courtship.

Women began to be more independent of their parents, although many did not. With many living away from their parents, the rules of courtship had to change. Those who stayed at home would experience the stereotypical supervised concept.

Parents would be there while the young man came calling. Some parents and young women, however, did not have or could not afford a separate parlor or living room. As a result, they took their courtship to the streets.

Public spaces became the abode of courtship. This use of open spaces soon caught on with all levels of society. Even the upper classes adopted it, finding it oh so droll. Nevertheless, courtship retained strong moral precepts. You courted only to get married. Sex was not a part of the courtship. Even during the loosening morals of WWI, premarital sex was not part of the normal form of courtship.

The end of WWI saw a shift in moral values and concepts of courtship. In fact, during the so-called "Roaring Twenties," the world erupted in a shift away from formal courtship and previously acceptable behavior. While gender roles remained in place, the ties loosened. This, too a large extent, was brought about by WWI. It had decreased the male population while altering their perception of life. Women had gained certain types of independence. They could, in some places, vote. They could certainly now work in a wider variety of jobs. Wars had also meant supporting the troops. It had meant attending functions without parents, unsupervised. Dancing with perfect military strangers was not condemned. It was a patriotic duty. So, too, was kissing them goodbye at the station.

The period following WWI was also part of a new technical revolution. Increasing mobility came through the mass production of the automobile. Cars became available to everyone. The cinema or movies became increasingly popular. As a result, men now picked up women from their home or apartment and they "went out." "Going out" soon became the norm. Courtship vanished. In its place came dating.

Along with the notion of unsupervised meetings, came another concept. Dating was not necessarily a serious matter. Marriage was not always to be the bi-product of dating. Dating was to show how popular you were. The successful boy or girl, man or woman, had lots-of-dates. These could be to a dance, a movie or a picnic. The Great Depression and World War II only continued to expand this new form of courtship. While some parents continued to retain tight control over the process, most lost control. At work were economic and social factors. During the 1930s, the increased push to keep children and young adults in school longer produced the beginning of another major factor in the dating equation – teenagers.

This is not to say there were no rules or similarities between courtship and dating. Ultimately, the goal for both was to produce a marriage. It was the sole goal of courting. In the 1930s, this became part of the "going steady" concept of dating. Going steady meant you abandoned the dating game to hang out with only one partner.

By 1945, dating had become a way of life. Parents stayed at home while their children went dancing at schools or dancehalls. Adults also became part of the dating game. World War II left widows. It also produced instances of divorce. Marriages made hastily under the threat of death fell apart during and after the

cessation of hostilities. By the 1950s, dating was the norm for every male and female in non-traditional societies. The youth movement of the 1960s continued to alter the form as did successive generations.

Today, while there are still traditional and arranged marriages, the majority of North Americans and Europeans date different people before deciding to settle down with one. Marriage is no longer the be-all and end-all of all pursuits. Dating is now also available in different forms. Instead of matchmakers, you have online dating services. There are also various ways to meet people. These include speed dating, chat lines and specific single clubs. All provide their successes and failures as people search for the ideal date.

BASIC CONCEPTS: ETIQUETTE AND SELF KNOWLEDGE

Etiquette is an old-fashioned word. Many people reject it for being this. Yet, there is much to be said for etiquette as it pertains to manners. If your first date is to be successful, manners and dating need to go hand-in-hand. This does not mean knowing when or if to open a door. It also does not imply you have to know which fork is what or how to give the right toast. What you need to be aware of are certain aspects of choosing and arranging your first date. This can be difficult because dating etiquette often involves unsaid rules. They vary from situation to situation.

For instance, theoretically, it is fine to ask out the best friend of your former girlfriend. This would seem to present no problem if your ex has moved on or the split was amicable. Do not do it. It will cause nothing but grief. Wait until at least your ex has settled down with one partner or moved on to have dated one, two, or even three. It depends upon several factors. These include the situation between you and your ex, her relationship to her "best friend" and whether you want to remain in one piece.

This is not the only instance when dating etiquette can confuse even the experts. It is also a reason why no specific dating book or expert can tell you everything you need to know to obtain the first date. There are other factors. These include the individual personalities involved.

Dating is about knowing yourself and others. You have to be aware of who you are and how you present yourself to the world around you. For some people, self-analysis is not an easy task. They delude themselves. They have no idea how they appear to other people. Worst still, they have no idea who they really are. Successful dating demands you know who you are and how others see you.

With first dates, self-knowledge and awareness of others is particularly important. If you are asking out someone, you already know from work or social functions, they already have an idea of whom you are – or at least who you come across as

being. If you approach them in an atypical manner, they may reject you for a number of reasons. First, this does not match with what they already know about you. Second, they reject you as not being their type on previous knowledge of your behavior. If you adopt what appears to them to be an atypical approach, they may reject you as a phony. This is why you need to know both who you are and how others see you.

If you are aware of your persona to the outside world, it will help you formulate an approach that will let you get a first date. It will also make you aware whether the person you plan to ask out on a first date will be receptive. Without this knowledge, you are setting yourself up for possible rejection. It may seem like a good idea to ask out that tall, leggy blond from accounting or that dark-haired tennis pro, but she may not even consider you in her league. Choose wisely. Remember, this First Date is just that – a first date, not a lifelong commitment.

Your first date may seem like Mount Everest. Sometimes, climbing that mountain may be preferable to the way the date turns out. Yet, if you understand the basics, you will soon adapt and advance onto the next level. With any luck, and lots of practice, your first dates will extend into longer affairs. The following pages will help you negotiate through and even avoid many of the landmines that are an integral part of first dates.

2

YOU'RE AN ADULT NOW: OR SINCE WHEN DID DATING GET SO COMPLICATED?

You are now an adult. Teenage angst is behind you. You are older, more experienced and possibly wiser and wealthier. Theoretically, life should be easier, but here you are, back at the start. You are single, wondering how to ask that woman, girl, female person out on a first date.

Now, before you let your stomach become tied up in knots or, worse still, go into avoidance mode, take a deep breath. Next, grab a pen and paper, sit at the computer or cuddle up with some other familiar list-making device. We are about to talk strategy here. You are about to prepare yourself for battle. Yes, even before you pop the question, you need to block-out a campaign. If nothing else, it will help calm your nerves. It will also clarify whether you are ready for this next step.

CONSIDERING THE TARGET

The very first thing you need to look at is availability.

- Is she available?
- Does she already have a boyfriend?
- What is her situation?
- Is she even interested in men?

In this day and age, it is always a good thing to discover such things out in advance.

If you are in everyday or even infrequent contact with her, this should not be a very difficult task. Consider any, and all, interaction the two of you have had.

- Did she seem interested at all in what you had to say?
- Was there an obvious attraction?

- What body language did she express?
- Did she stand close or step back? If she stood as far away from you as possible, you may have to discard her as your primary target.
- Where did the meetings take place?

You always have to put things into context. Doing so will help prevent you from becoming self-deluded. This, you have to avoid at all costs. Do not “read into” the comments or situations things that are not really there. If you have any doubts, ask a good friend. If you know any mutual friends, this can really help clarify her situation.

Next, you should consider the content of these conversations.

- Were there any indicators from her or anyone else there of particular interests?
- Did she mention specific groups or types of music she liked?
- Is she an opera fan or does she prefer rap?
- Did movies come up?
- If so, what genre?
- Is she fond of video games or did she say she liked hiking, swimming, mountain bike riding or any other outdoor activity?
- Is she the kind of girl who reads, paints or writes in her spare time or for a living?
- Does she like to go out or stay home?
- Does she prefer clubbing or quiet jazz or folk clubs?
- Is she a group person or does she prefer to be alone?

Putting together what she said and where she said it, can help you in a number of ways. It may determine whether she will be receptive. Just as important, it will help you to discover whether the two of you have anything or anyone in common. It will also give you an indication of where you can go and what you can do on your first date. Knowing this information, you can begin planning and preparation for asking her out.

WHERE TO GO FOR THE FIRST DATE

You have some information on your similar interests. Now, you can consider another important aspect – where to go on the date. You have to be careful in selecting this. If she has already seen the play, movie or opera, she may say no. If you choose the wrong interest, she will say no. You need to pick the right place for a date.

The perfect place may be a mirage, but you can find somewhere where the two of you can have a good or even a great time. The first criterion is cost. You may not

have a lot of money to spend. You may even be the kind of person who holds onto a cent until it screams for mercy. In either case, I have to inform you dating can prove to be costly. You will need to spend some money.

The cost for a first date will vary according to what you want to do, how much money you have and whether the woman wants or insists on paying half. Since you asked her out, however, you are usually expected to take care of all costs. Assume this, when you plan where to go. Be financially prepared. Can you spell CREDIT CARD?

While some dates are happy to go anywhere just to be out of the house at night, this does not mean you take them to a fast food joint. If this is a dinner or lunch date, go for something a little or a lot more up-scale. This does not mean the best restaurant in town. It also means you do not take them to the cheapest. Find a middle way. It should be somewhere the two of you feel comfortable. If you go as part of a double date or a group of people, you can reduce the costs and help lessen any possible tension.

If you decide to take her for a bite to eat, be sure you know her tastes. If she is religious, she may not be able to eat certain foods. If she has allergies, the same thing applies. There are also people who are vegetarians or strict vegans. Can you imagine the problems if you book a table in a place where everything consists of meat and dairy products? This is another reason you need to do your homework. There are other options for a first date. There are the traditional movies and dinner or a snack afterwards. You can take her to a concert, a club or a café. There are seasonal parties you can ask her to be your guest at and other outings. Sometimes, a movie, or the theater is the simplest and safest choice. Yet, you can go beyond safe.

There are dates you can best describe as adventures. If your future date is an adventurous soul, you may want to consider these active alternatives. Take her to a climbing wall. This is an excellent place for you to work off stress and let her see how you are away from work. (I am supposing you are not a professional in this field.) Go for a long hike. Go spelunking or rock climbing. A date does not have to conform to traditional standards.

For environmentalists, you may want to ask her to the next protest. You could take her to an exhibit on or some place where her interests are being put into action. This could be a shelter or an animal preserve. You could obtain tickets to a lecture on the topic. While these may not sound Romantic to you, to this type of girl it is. It shows you care about her interests and share her concerns for the world.

There is a warning here. Do not fake an interest in something just because she is into it. Your fraudulent behavior will become obvious. You need to do something in which you, too, can have fun. You need to be comfortable and honest. If you have never done rock climbing or paragliding before, tell her. Say you know she has experience and would like to try it with someone you can trust – her. Telling it this way is flattering. It will show a willingness on your part to expand your personal

horizons. It may also mean you may never try something like that again. At least, you will have crossed it off your to do list.

One point here to keep in mind. Do not finalize any extravagant or otherwise plans until you have asked her out. If you must purchase or decide to buy such things as tickets in advance, make sure you have a plan B. This way, you can still go to the event and not waste your money.

PRIOR PREPARATION TO POPPING THE QUESTION

THE PHYSICAL

There are various ways to ensure you are physically ready for that first or any other date. It is all about personal hygiene. You need to look your very best. At the same time, you should not overdo it. If you are a casual kind of guy, do not appear all duded up. If you tend to dress up, do not dress down. This is particularly true if the woman you are about to ask out already knows you. This also applies to the situation. If you are going to ask her out at work, you need to dress accordingly. What is important here is the overall presentation. No matter what you are wearing, you and it must be clean. Wash your hair, style it if need be, scrub yourself clean. If you shave, do so without cuts and nicks. If you do not, make sure your beard or mustache is clean and trimmed. These are superficial, but people still judge a book, initially, by its cover.

The same rational applies to your clothes. They must be clean and fit properly. You should smell nice but not overpoweringly so. Some women do not want to go out with a man who smells prettier than they do. There is also the case of allergies. Does your potential date have any? You do not stand much of a chance if she ends up sneezing when you try to ask her out.

THE APPROACH

There are two basic approaches to ask a girl out - direct or indirect. There are proponents for both styles. In fact, each does have its specific merits and appeals as well as its drawbacks. You need to know your own confidence level, your ability and preference. You also need to be aware of the woman's position. Will a direct approach work? Is it better to be open-ended or indirect?

The direct approach is simple. You go up to the woman, hopefully alone (if not, take her aside casually) and ask if she wants to go out a weekday, Saturday, Sunday afternoon, evening or morning to such and such event. At its most basic, the direct approach is, well, direct. It is straightforward. It states simply and effectively your intention. You want to go out with so-and-so to such-and-such a place on such-

and-such a date. You can say it all at once and get a reply. You can get it over with quickly.

With the direct approach, your intentions are crystal clear. It can be very effective on some women and for some occasions. On the other hand, when it falls flat, it sinks into the floor and heads for the basement. This is because the direct approach leaves no wriggle room. It does not allow for consideration or graceful opting out. It is an all-or-none tactic. You generally get a yes or a no. Sometimes, you may get a "let me think about it." This is not a good sign.

The indirect approach is less, well, direct. This method allows both of you the chance to be graceful in either acceptance or rejection. It also makes alternatives available. It is open-ended and clearly indicates interest. You may not provide a specific date or even event. You may simply indicate your interest and leave it up to her to reciprocate or not. A problem is you may not resolve your interest. The following are examples of both methods:

1. "Hi. How would you like to get together sometime?" **Indirect.**
2. I'm planning to go see/attend/visit _____this week. Are you interested in coming with me? **Direct**
3. I have tickets to see _____, care to join me? **Direct and indirect.**
4. Would you like to go out to dinner/the movies/a concert next week? **Direct.**
5. I'm having several people from _____ and some friends over for a get together/football game/the Oscars etc. this/next weekend. Care to join us? **Indirect.**
6. Is it true you really enjoy ballroom dancing, salsa, Monty Python, Chagall, this group/ this performer, etc.? I have tickets to this show/concert/ exhibit etc. Would you care to join me? **Indirect and Direct.**
7. Several of us are going to _____? Care to join us? **Indirect.**
8. Would you like to play tennis/golf etc. with me some day next week? **Direct.**
9. Maybe we could get together for a drink/coffee some time. **Indirect.**
10. I've heard you like Westerns or Alfred Hitchcock or foreign films? So do I. Next week, _____ is holding a marathon. Care to join me? **Indirect.**
11. I want to try _____. I hear you're an expert. Could you teach me? **Indirect.**

OTHER FACTORS

The two approaches differ, but you can combine them. What you also need to consider is how you are going to initiate the event. Do you corner her? Do you

approach her at work/exercise/event, as she is leaving work, the event, etc.? You will have to rely on your own assessment of the situation. It may be taboo to ask her at work, but you may be able to do so at lunch or a coffee break. When she is working out at the gym, you may not want to interfere with her routine. Perhaps, you can talk to her during her break, or as she is getting ready to leave.

There is also the phone and e-mail or instant messenger. The phone is easier for some. It is convenient and allows them to relax. You can have a script ready from which to read. It is also impersonal. Save the phone as a follow up unless it is pre-arranged. As for text messages and other forms of electronic communication – this is appropriate if this is how you met. If you meet on-line, naturally, you can ask her on-line. If you see her in person, it is better to ask her in person. You may, however, use the internet to contact her to arrange a meeting to ask her out. With some busy people, this may be the only way you can do so.

Whether you decide to talk to her before, in the middle of something or afterwards is up to you. This is a personal call. What you should do, for your sake and hers, is to ask her out when she is alone. It is usually difficult and embarrassing to ask someone if they are with a bunch of people. This is particularly true if she turns you down or responds negatively.

I HAVE A QUESTION, DO YOU HAVE AN ANSWER?

The day arrives. You are groomed and prepped for the event. In a few minutes or hours, you will be back in the dating game, you hope. Here are a few more tips to consider.

1. Be assertive but not aggressive in your approach. Do not come on like barnstormers.
2. Be confident but not cocky.
3. Relax.
4. Be real. Most women can spot a phony a mile away.
5. Do not make this seem like the fate of the world lies in the balance. It is a date, not the be-all and end-all.
6. Listen carefully to what you are saying.
7. Listen even more carefully to what she replies.
8. Consider it a learning process. You have not dated in a long or even longer time.
9. If she says, "Yes," celebrate quietly. Say great or something similar than go back to work, play, etc.

10. If she rejects you, do not take it to heart. As the book says, "She's just not into you." It is better to find that out now than later. Look at it as an experience, a trial run. Practice will make perfect IF you learn from it.

With the first effort over, no matter how it goes, you have begun the first steps back into a relationship with the opposite sex. Your first date may turn out to be fun, boring, or even a disaster. Whatever the outcome, it marks the first of many forays into the sometimes crazy, but never dull, world of dating.

THE DATE

You have the right venue. You are dressed appropriately. You are ready to rumble. The problem – what on earth are you going to talk about? Yes, you will have to make polite conversation. You will need to express opinions. You will also have to LISTEN. In fact, if you listen, the conversation will flow more easily. You just need to respond and fill in the blanks.

A FEW POINTERS ON CONVERSATION GAMBITS

If you do your research, you will already know some things in which she has an interest. Be sure to read a little about them so you can ask intelligent questions and follow her answers. If you know nothing or even a little about her favorite subject, say so. Admit you are weak in this area or downright stupid. Ask her about it and say you are interested but never seem to have the time to do/see/read everything you want. Whatever you do, **DO NOT** dismiss her arguments or statements. Do not belittle her opinions. If you do, you will never get beyond a first date with her, or, possibly, any other female.

If you go to a movie, play or concert, talking together should be more natural. You have something you just shared - talk about it. Discuss the plot, acting, lighting, actors and other aspects of the film. Compare it to other works by the screenwriter, director, actors or producer. Mention whether you agree with the critics on their take of this film, movie, etc. If the work is based on a book, and you have read it, ask her what she thinks. Whatever you do, do not assume you are right. Pay attention to what she has to say. You do not have to agree with it. You can argue in a friendly fashion about it. Just do not dismiss what she has to say.

Any activity you share makes communication possible. If you do something stupid, laugh at yourself. In fact, try to introduce laughter into the conversation. If you can make her laugh, you are on the way to a successful date. While many women find the outer package attractive and admire the intelligence of a man, you will find, to many women, a "keeper" is someone who makes them smile.

If you are truly worried about your conversational abilities, consider going out in a group. This removes from you some of the onus. It can make the date more an

informal affair. This is certainly helpful if you are both shy. If you hang out with mutual friends, you can both relax and exchange words safely. You could also go clubbing where it may be too loud for you to talk. At the same time, you can chat about whether it was fun, afterwards.

The same applies if you take part in a sporting event. You need your breath if you are playing tennis. The same holds true for other active sports and sporting events. You enjoy the event and save the talk for later.

Pick your venue wisely. It should reflect your interests, her interests, and your ability to take it from there. You must always keep in mind good conversation consists of two parts: listening and speaking. If you place too much emphasis on you talking about you and all you have done and are, you will have a one-sided and, probably one-off date. If the focus of any date is you, you are sentencing yourself to a life of first dates.

3

SINGLE DAD ON THE PROWL: AVOIDING LOOKING FOR LOVE IN ALL THE WRONG PLACES

For some reason - separation, divorce or death, you are single again. You never thought this would happen. Now, here you are, a single Dad, getting ready to join the dating pool again. It may have been hard enough the first time, but now you have greater responsibilities. You have a child or two who depends upon you. You have a teenager or young one who has demands. The big question now is whether you have the time and energy to date.

It is not easy dating and being a parent. You have to balance your needs and those of your children. You are trying to be a capable parent and a good date. This requires skills and sensitivity to everyone's needs – including your own. You will need to be adaptable and a skilled juggler.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Do not deny the reality of your situation. Although the first woman you plan to ask out is just the start, you still need to be honest about your situation. It is not wise to pretend you are "single." You are a single parent. This means, during your date, you may get a call from the baby sitter or the children themselves. It may also mean you have to cancel the date at the last moment if your child comes down sick or produces a note requiring your attendance.

Talk to your children about what you are planning to do. They do not need to know all the details. They do have to know you are planning to date, again. You must assure them you are not planning to replace their mother. You need to affirm you still love them and always will. You need to let them know they are your priority. You also must tell them you need this. You have to let them know that female adult companionship helps to make you a happier and better person.

OVERALL PREPARATION

SELECTING YOUR DATE

As a single Dad, your requirements may vary wildly from those of the average single male. Preparing a date will vary somewhat. Single people do not usually have to take into consideration the needs of one or more children. You may require a sitter. You will need a cell phone. You will also have to have a definite destination. In other words, you need to choreograph your date.

Single parent's dates tend to be less spontaneous. They also need to work within a specific timeframe. You have to be home at a certain time. There is less wiggle room. As a result, you will have to make sure you have made all the arrangements in advance. You also need to verify them with the establishments or venues and your kids. Everyone must be on the same page. This includes your date.

Your choice of date is crucial to its success. Although you may not be seeking someone who loves your children, you will need someone who understands your position. They have to, at least, like children. This makes it possible for them to relate to you. It facilitates conversation. It also makes it easier for them to understand why you have to leave them or stand them up with little or no notice.

Otherwise, preparation for your first date is identical to that cited in Chapter 2. You need to do your research. You need to find out her likes and dislikes. You need to plan an event the two of you will enjoy. You must present a confident, clean and fresh appearance when you ask her out. You must always be honest about who you are – a single father. If you ignore this or mislead her on this, there will not be another date after she finds out.

Whether you use a direct or indirect approach is up to you. It depends upon her personality, your character and whatever you think works. In some ways, a flexible and indirect approach may work better. It gives the two of you a chance to organize the date. As a parent, you may need the extra time to arrange or even rearrange the details.

WHERE TO GO

Where you go on your first date says a lot about both you and your date. There are always the safe choices: a movie, dinner, lunch, a concert. You can also arrange to go on a picnic or for a walk. If she is active, engage in a common sporting activity. Time is always a factor. If your ex has the children for the weekend, you will have more free time. You will also be able to relax a bit more. If, however, a sitter is involved, you have a set time. Sometimes, an extension is just not possible. Make sure your date knows this.

If you are pressed for time after work, perhaps you can arrange for a lunch date. This reduces such problems as finding a sitter. It also ensures, if the date goes bad, you are not going to suffer overlong. It may also cut down on any interference from your children. They are at school, at the babysitter's or caught up in their own affairs.

Another suggestion is an outing with the family. You, the first date and the children get together. This could be a solution. It could also be a recipe for disaster. In most cases, the woman hardly knows you, let alone knows your children. If you have the urge to include your children in your first date, resist it. It is too much, too soon, for someone you are dating for the first time. You cannot count on good behavior from them. Save your children and all their foibles for later.

Along the same lines - absolutely avoid, as a first date, an event in which your child plays a role. Do not take your date to a child's sporting event. Your date is not yet a part of your life. Do not take her to a banquet, game, award ceremony or assembly. While there are exceptions, many women will feel this implies more than a first date. As a scare tactic, it can be very successful. As a means to a second date, forget about it.

WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT?

Conversation is always awkward for some people. Listening is an important factor of conversation BUT one person should not be always doing the listening. You both need to talk. Yet, what should you talk about?

You should not avoid talking about yourself and your family. That is an integral part of you. It may also be the reason she accepted your invitation. That said, do not dwell on your family. This is adult time. You need to talk about more than your children.

Conversation is about two people exchanging words. Let her ask questions. Let her talk about her life. Let both of you make small talk about similar interests. If you work together, talk a bit about work. If you have come from a movie or concert, talk about it. Talk about local news, the weather and sports. Talk about the food, diets, and the foibles of life.

If you doubt your ability to carry on a conversation, double date or go out with friends. You can also read up. Scan a newspaper or read the latest headlines on your computer home page. If you have done your homework, you will know what she likes and what you have in common. Start off mentioning you have read or seen _____ and go from there.

Try to relax. Listen and talk. Do not put down or ignore what she has to say. Really listen to what she has to say and respond accordingly. If you can, inject some humor into the conversation. Make a small joke or make fun of something you did. Making her laugh is one way to winning her over. Do not be crude or lewd. Double-entendre may or may not work. Remember. This is a first date. It is about learning more about each other. It is also about deciding whether either of you wants to take it further.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The first date is an important step for you. It is a recognition you are moving on in your life. It is a realization and acceptance of your current situation. A first date is a first step. It is hard work. It may turn out to be invigorating. It could also be disheartening. Yet, it is a necessary action. You need to take it to move back into the world of healthy adult relationships.

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DATING SINGLE MOMS

You find a woman attractive. You want to ask her out. You are also aware she presents a challenge. Your possible date is a single mom. How do you go about ensuring this first date has a good chance of being a success?

Much of the preparatory work for dating a single mom varies not at all from that required for a single female. You need to do your research. You need to find out the following:

- Does she like you?
- Is she interested in dating?
- Is she interested in dating you?
- Her interests
- Any activities you may have in common.

You also need to decide on a time and place. You require the above information to guide you in your choice and approach. In this particular instance, however, you have to take into consideration other factors – her children.

DATING WITH CHILDREN

Dating a single mom can be a logistical nightmare that could challenge even the most seasoned military campaigner. While you are not dating the woman's children, they do play a significant role in when, for how long and even where you can date. You have to consider her timeframe when it comes to asking her out. You may have to give her a more open-ended invitation or ask well in advance. For example, the event may be for this weekend, but her ex-husband does not take the kids until next weekend. He is not always flexible.

As a result, you have to plan well in advance, ask well in advance and be very aware of her schedule. Use an invitation that is flexible. Consider the following lines:

1. Would you like to go out with me sometime?

2. I know you have a full plate with work and your kids, but I would like to go out with you. Is there any time that is good for you?
3. There's a concert/lecture/event next week/month. Are you interested?
4. Do you have time to have lunch or coffee with me?
5. Would you like to grab a bite to eat/catch a movie/go to a dance etc. some time soon?

Part of asking a single mom out is to let her know you know she has children. Do not make an issue of it. Do not appear to know too much about her circumstances. It could scare her off. Some single mom's have trust issues. Let her know it is her you wish to date. You know she has children, but you want to get to know her, first.

WHERE TO GO

Where you decide to take your date depends upon you, her interests and her availability. In this instance, her schedule and the demands of her children will prevail over what you may consider important. While children do not rule your life, they are an important factor in hers. In essence, you are dating both the woman and her children.

For a first date, you may want to make it a lunch break from work. It may be convenient for her to see you while her children are at school or in day care. This also allows the two of you to meet and discover information about each other with a decreased possibility of child interference. In this instance, time enforces constraints, but this can help you both to focus.

After school or work, dates may prove more difficult. Even the average type of first date may prove tricky. Do not take it personally if she has to leave abruptly. Do not be upset if she cancels. Children become sick or present obstacles, usually without premeditation. Simply ask to reschedule your first date and take it from there. You should not arrange your first date to include the children. This is only the first date. It may end there. Your intent is to get to know **her**. Later is time enough to see her in her other role. Having children present for the first date also sends them the wrong signal. It implies more. At this junction, you do not know if there is a second date, let alone a relationship.

CONVERSATION

On a date, silence is not golden. What you can and do not say on a date can hurt you and your chances for a second date. The two of you need to talk. You both need to provide information on your lives, interests, opinions and preferences. It is

highly likely she will want to talk some about her kids. Be prepared to listen. Do not offer opinions unless she asks for them or you have some experience.

At the same time, you need to talk about yourself. At this early stage of dating, no one person should dominate the conversation. You should both provide the basics, being succinct. You also should go beyond name, rank and serial number but without providing intimate and detailed information or blow-by-blow descriptions. Neither of you should spend overlong talking about former mates.

You need to move the conversation along onto mutually interesting topics. Drawing on your research and possibly the event/concert etc. you have just attended, talk or ask about it. Ask about favorite books, TV shows, music, and authors. Keep the tone light but not frivolous. Never dismiss her opinions as invalid or insignificant. This may be the reason she is now separated. Be amusing, if you can do so, but not at her expense.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is not easy to ask a single woman out for the first time. It requires all sorts of research and preparation. You need to look and sound your best. You place yourself out on a limb, exposing your vulnerability. It is never a painless task. In asking a single mom out, you are making the event more challenging. It will require more patience and dexterity to arrange and carry out your first of what could be many dates.

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FIRST DATE DATING TIPS FOR SENIORS

You are contemplating asking her out for your first date. The problem is you don't know whether you can do it. Well, you know you can ask her out, the difficulty is if you can do it the right way. It has been a long time – we are talking decades here, since you asked anyone out. Not only have you changed, but so, too, has dating. It is a whole, new world out there and you are not sure whether you can take it on without flopping miserably.

Such anxieties are natural. You want to make sure you clinch the date. You do not want to be rejected. If you do nothing, however, someone else may ask her out. You will then be left at home going nowhere and not doing what you really want to do. Is this what you want?

In fact, the first thing you need to do is to look closely at what you do want. Be honest. Why are you interested in asking this woman out? The reasons do vary from when you were first dating. They could be any of the following:

- Someone to talk to
- A friend to go with me to movies, concerts and parties
- Companionship
- Someone to do my washing, cooking and cleaning
- A person to take care of me
- Someone to share the rest of my life with
- Sex

Whatever your reason, you need to be honest. You also need to realize the first person you ask out may not match your criteria. Like when you were younger, you will have to have a first date more than once to find what and whom you want. You also have to be ready for rejection. Not everyone you ask will want to go out with you. They all have their reasons. Let's just hope it has nothing to do with your current track record. If you suspect this to be true, you need to carefully consider the advice provided below.

One of the obstacles to dating is the change in dating habits. Women have become more liberal as time has sped on. They assume a first date is just that a first date. They no longer feel so obligated to find a partner. In fact, the women you successfully ask out have probably been married already. Depending upon their experience, they may not want to marry again - ever. It is their prerogative.

Another problem is where to go. If you once enjoyed going to nightclubs or single bars, you are unlikely to find any specifically designed with senior dating in mind. If you date likes such things as jazz or folk, you can still locate several of these clubs. These venues are usually quieter. You can actually talk and frequently dine. There are also older dance clubs where you can learn and have a good time dancing.

Finding a place to take your date is part of the challenge. You can go to a library or bookstore. Here, you can catch a lecture or a book signing. Sometimes, these places host book clubs. A discussion of the authors in a group setting can help you break the ice. Conversation can flow more easily if you have something about which the both of you can talk.

If you are still active, take her to a sporting event. Better still, go off and play tennis. Take a brisk walk or hike scenic trails. You may decide to go to an art gallery for an opening or a museum. Why not take her antiquing or to a farmers' market or flea market. This provides you with plenty of things to look at and on which to converse. Perhaps a fair is in town or there is a special lecture.

Always consider what the two of you have in common. Always consider the amount of mobility you two are capable of maintaining. If she is a sedentary, stick with something quiet, with places you can sit down and talk. It could be a lunch or dinner date. It could also be a park or botanical garden with benches scattered in strategic spots.

If you both like sports go golfing, catch a baseball game, go to the track or play tennis. Make the most of the date. Seize the opportunity to make it comfortable and memorable. If you want to see her again, you have to give her a reason why she should do so.

PREPARING FOR ASKING THE QUESTION

One way to prepare yourself for asking her out is to research her. Knowing something about her besides her name will help you determine whether you are compatible. It will indicate common interests. It will also help you to decide whether your needs/wants and her needs and wants have any common ground. Doing your homework may also help you relax when you actually pose the question. You will have more than an idea of who she is and what she likes. This may increase the chances of your venture being successful. You will know what she might want to go to see. This will improve your confidence. It helps you ask her. Be confident, but do not be cocky.

In fact, one of the major problems with many senior men is attitude. They know single senior women outnumber them. As a result, some feel they are doing a woman a favor by asking her out. You are not. Abandon any condescending tones or mannerisms. Some women are divorced because they have had enough of this same attitude. They do not owe their happiness to a man.

Another problem is vanity. Do not lie about your age. What is the point? You should be proud you are still alive and functioning. You have experience and, hopefully, have accumulated wisdom in some form or other. Moreover, the truth of these matters always comes out. When it does, it will throw some doubts on your credibility in other areas. This will decrease your chances of obtaining any more first dates.

In fact, it is important you be honest in your intent and in your words. By now, older women have a built-in lie detector. They are as experienced as you are, and not easily fooled. You need to be direct in your approach. You need to ask the question in a plain and clear manner. You also need to make apparent this is a first date and not a lifetime commitment. Some women may want to date you for fun and companionship. They may not have the same goals as you do.

So how do you, a senior, ask another senior out on a first date? At your age, you can afford to be more direct. You can simply be straightforward and ask her if she would like to go to such-and-such event on such-and-such a day. You can mention you have heard ____ is coming to _____. Would she like to go with you?

This is a simple approach. It does usually require, however, either a yes or no answer. It may be too specific for some. It may leave you feeling too open to rejection. Yet, if this works for you, use it. If it doesn't, opt for a more open-ended or indirect approach. You can ask her if she would like to go out sometime. You could mention you are going to _____ and have an extra ticket. She is welcome to join you.

The indirect approach is one without apparent pressure. It expresses a desire to date without locking it in. The woman can mull it over, accept immediately or let it go. She can do so without instantly rejecting you. Its flaw is you may feel obligated to wait around for an answer that may never come.

Another possible option is to make the date inclusive. You can ask her to be part of several seniors, couples and singles, on a trip or excursion. In this way, you can arrange to partner her without placing the onus of rejection on you. She may reject the outing but not, necessarily, you. Going on a group event also takes some of the stress of making conversation off of you. At the same time, you may not learn as much about her as you had hoped.

THE CONVERSATION

No matter whether you date as a couple or in a group, conversation remains an important part. You will need to talk and listen. Try to do so in equal measures. Do not dominate or control the conversation. Try to find common ground. You will know what to talk about if you have done your homework. You will also be able to have a readily available topic if you have just gotten out of a specific event.

Touch on your past, but do not dwell on it. Do not spend all your time lecturing on something e.g. the faults of today's youths, economy, etc. Also, do not talk continuously about former wives or dates. If all she does is nod, you are not getting anywhere but nowhere fast. If her eyes begin to glaze over, and she glances continually at the clock, you really do need to change the conversation.

Try a touch of humor. Make her laugh. Women like men who make them laugh. Try for honesty and do make light of yourself. Above all, remember, this is a first date. It is the start of something for you even if it is not for her.

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ONLINE DATING

People are busy. They rush from place to place. Sometimes, they can find no time to seek out a possible mate or partner or companion. They may not even be able to locate someone to go to a movie with, no strings attached. For them, the answer may be the internet.

Online dating is actually an extension of an older practice – the matchmaker. It is a newer form of this practice. Its possibilities are immense; its abuses are legendary. You require a computer. It helps if you have some computer skills. Yet, you can learn these as you go along.

The internet has thousands of sites offering everyone the chance to find someone. There are dating sites for gays, adults, seniors, women, men, married couples, Buddhists, Christians and more. The chance of finding someone with your specific interest increases when you join a chat room or dating site. So, too does the “kook” factor. It often depends upon the site.

Picking a site is important. While there are free internet dating services out there, they may be really “out there.” It is a case of “You get what you paid for” or “Buyer beware.” On free sites, there is little or no control of who signs up. Anyone can claim he or she is anyone. As a result, if you can only afford such a dating service, be very careful. Do not take everything they e-mail you at face value. Never arrange your first face-to-face date in a private place. Always meet in some public venue.

The same is true for even the most expensive dating sites. Yes, they can become costly. It depends upon how much you are willing to pay. These sites have more restrictions. There are more controls in place. This does not mean, however, you can blithely accept everything as true. Admit it, you have probably fudged at least a little of the details of your profile. It is human nature.

Select your site carefully. Be as truthful as you can in posting your profile. Be honest in your preferences and intentions. Do not lead anyone on. Post a picture, but do not provide for all to see any personal information. This includes your address, phone number and e-mail. This is for your own protection. Use only the provided address to receive your e-mail and potential first dates. This will help you sort out the sincere people from the weirdoes.

Always be careful about who you think you are conversing with on line. The internet is all about knowing someone anonymously. Some people use it to fulfill their fantasies. They post their true picture but their conversation is from their alter ego. You need to sort through the phonies and the pretenders to find the person you want to ask out on a date. Do not rush the process. Take your time to determine whether the person you are "chatting with" is the person you are chatting with.

SETTING UP THE DATE

When you decide to meet up for the first time, you will still need to consider several precautions. Talking to someone online can give you a false sense of intimacy. You need to step back. You do not really know this person. You only know what she has told you. In effect, you are asking someone out on a blind date.

Asking her out will not be difficult. You have plenty of space between you and her. You can even stick to a prewritten script. Just remember, once you hit the send key, it is a done deal. Nevertheless, treat your proposal as you would a face-to-face meeting. The only difference is you will be asking her if she would like to meet you. You can state a specific time and place. If she does not live in your community, this may complicate matters. Nevertheless, you should arrange for this first real time, real people date before you move to the next level.

WHERE TO GO

Always meet in a public place. Never invite her into your home or meet there. It is important the two of you get together somewhere public and busy. This will ensure your safety. While the girl may be genuine, there is the chance she is not. A quiet restaurant, a public square, a café – these are possibilities. Remember, she does not know who you really are, either. It will put her at ease if you set your first date in a coffee shop or some place as public.

Yes, you can be adventurous in planning your first date. You may want to take her to a rock climbing wall or go roller/ice skating. You can visit the zoo or a fair. These are all busy places. Both of you will feel a sense of security. The activities will also give you something to talk about before, during and afterwards.

WHAT TO AVOID

If she lives out of town, do not offer her your home. Do not say you will pay the entire sum for her to visit. Do not accept an offer to stay at her place. There are too many implications behind such arrangements. There are also possible safety issues involved. You need to ensure the protection of you and of your date.

Online first dates have their problems. Yet, by following basic precautions and common sense, you can enjoy your first date offline with your online girl.

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SUMMING IT ALL UP

While asking for your first date can be a minefield, it doesn't have to be. You can make it a pleasurable experience. You simply need to prepare yourself. Whether you are a young adult or a senior, asking her out is simpler if you do your research. Find out whether you have a chance, first. Know what she likes to do. Base your proposal on this information and your chances of success will increase.

Make sure you look and smell your best when you ask her out. Be confident but not cocky. Ask her succinctly either directly or indirectly. If she rejects you, it is not the end of the world. Learn from it. Go back and next time, you may succeed. After all, dating is more an art than a science.