

Dating Safety Guide



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Preface

While researching dating safety for a blog post on my website [It Might Be Love](#), I was surprised I could not easily find a “one-stop-resource” for dating safety. It was difficult enough to find accurate and reliable statistics.

Because of this, I decided to compile the dating safety tips I have learned or discovered and share them in an easy to read and understand format. This eBook is in PDF format so it can also easily be shared with your friends, relatives, and colleagues.

This is a very simple eBook with little graphics or fancy typefaces. But within this simple eBook is a lot of information to help you stay safe while dating and enjoy dating and meeting new people as much as possible.

If just one person is able to read this and avoid a dangerous situation, this eBook has fulfilled its purpose.

Identifying Danger

Dating is supposed to be a fun means of meeting new people and enjoying oneself. Unfortunately, many people use dating as a means of taking advantage of or harming others.

It is not easy to identify potential dangerous situations. There is no sure sign that someone should or should not be trusted.

It is a common misconception that only women are vulnerable to becoming victims of dating violence and that men are always the perpetrator. Men are also able to be victimized and women are just as capable of victimizing a man. It's also possible for your date to be working with an accomplice.

Another common misconception is only strangers are likely to be dangerous. According to [RAINN](#) (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network), 73% of all rape victims know their assailants.

Many online dating sites now require all applicants to pass criminal background checks to give members a better sense of security. However, just because someone doesn't have a record does it mean they have provided accurate information or isn't capable of hurting you emotionally or physically. Don't let these things give you a false sense of security.

Practice dating safety tips no matter who you are, who they are, or how you met.

The #1 Dating Safety Tip:

Trust Your Instincts.

Trusting your instincts is a safety tip that cannot be emphasized enough.

If you feel like something seems strange or unusual, don't just brush it off.

If a person makes you feel uncomfortable, anxious, or insecure, chances are you feel these ways for a reason. Don't make excuses for being neurotic or paranoid. Our bodies are programmed to sense and react to dangerous signals. Don't ignore your gut feelings about a person or situation.

If you find yourself feeling uneasy or uncomfortable, remove yourself from the situation, end communication with the person, and tell a trusted friend, relative, or professional about your concerns.

Play Detective

With technology today you can often find out a lot about a person just with some very basic information. Here are ways to research a potential date online:

Search Engine Results: Type the person's full name, into Google, Yahoo, and other popular search engines. Look at the first 2-3 pages to see what comes up. If too many generic results come up, keep tweaking your search terms until you find something relevant. You can try adding hobbies or interests, geographic locations, or search by email address or user name.

Public Records Search: Anywho.com is a phone book directory where you can search by name, location, or do a reverse phone number look-up.

Another source of information could be your local county's real estate assessment webpage if they have one available. Many times they will allow you to search by last name or street address. Some sites even show the actual deeds or if a person is behind in taxes.

Warning: Beware of companies offering to charge you for information on a person. Most information is readily and freely available through your local, state and federal government websites.

Take Advantage of Megan's Law: Megan's Law requires that all convicted sex offenders be reported and this information be freely available to the general public.

[The U.S. Department of Justice Sex Offenders Website](#) provides photos, physical descriptions, aliases, addresses, and other information for the general public safety. Keep in mind these records may not be up to date. It should also be noted that if you use the information contained on that website to threaten, intimidate, or harass any individual, including registrants or family members, or otherwise misuse the information, you may be subject to criminal prosecution or civil liability.

Guard Your Personal Information

Just as you are able to research a lot of personal information about play detective on a person, people can just as easily look up the same information on you.

Never give a date your home address or home phone number: Use or cell phone or sign up for a service on [Skype.com](https://www.skype.com) where you can either talk on the phone through your computer for free or purchase a separate phone number that will forward all calls to your main line. Their service is very affordable and it well worth it to protect yourself online.

Never under any circumstances give a potential date your passwords, social security numbers, credit card numbers, or other bank or credit account information: This may seem like no-brainer, but many people will try to build a relationship with you and lead you into trusting them. They will often make up some sort of sob story to convince you to give them this information or money. After they clean out your bank account they disappear. This does not just happen to people online but in other scenarios as well.

Your date may request ID: This is a reasonable request, but require that you also see your date's ID at the same time. Keep in mind that it is very easy to produce a fake ID. Most people do not know what security features to look for, especially since many states change their ID cards frequently or have different styles for different age groups or licenses.

Keep your wallet or purse on you at all times: Never leave your wallet or purse alone unattended with a date until you build a solid relationship and trust. If the person you are on a date with is a thief, he or she may copy your credit card or other personal information without you ever realizing it since the card would still be in your wallet. Some thieves may even be so bold to actually steal cash or credit cards from your purse or wallet.

Be Safe Online

Many people often ask “Is Online Dating Safe?” The answer is yes, if you know how to protect yourself and be careful. There are many legitimate people using online dating websites everyday.

Here are some tips on safe online dating:

Take it slow: There is no reason to rush out and meet someone you’ve chatted with for 10 minutes online. Exchange multiple emails before exchanging phone numbers. Exchange multiple phone calls before meeting in person.

Post appropriate pictures: Do not be tempted to use “sexy” or “glamour shot” photos online. Many online predators will be naturally drawn to these types of pictures. Choose conservative pictures that reflect who you are. If you enjoy fishing for example, a picture of you fishing may be the perfect thing. A picture of you without a shirt on probably wouldn’t be.

Use an appropriate user name: Do not use your full name as a user name. Do not use user names that may also convey the wrong message to potential matches. (Ex: Sexkitten6969) You may want to consider using a different user name for dating sites than you use for your email or other websites.

Use a separate email account: You may want to have an email exclusively for online dating sites. This will make it easy for you to sort and track all communications, as well as avoid anyone you do not want to communicate with.

Choose Reputable Dating Sites: While any site can be vulnerable to fraudulent members, most will shy away from reputable and paid subscription sites. Other sites may offer free background checks, personal interviews with date applicants, or other security features. While these are an added bonus, none of these methods are completely foolproof.

Use Skype.com or other similar services: [Skype.com](https://www.skype.com) makes it possible to talk to someone on the telephone over your computer without giving them your home or cell phone number. Another added bonus is that if your potential match also uses [Skype](https://www.skype.com) you can both talk to each other for free. You can also choose to get a [Skype](https://www.skype.com) phone number that can be forwarded directly to a cell or landline number, so you never have to give a date your main phone number until you’re ready to.

Recognize Online Red Flags

A “red flag” is a warning sign that may suggest a person you have met online has ulterior motives or is not the person they say they are.

Here are some common red flags to look out for:

No profile picture: Some people are just shy. Others have something to hide. It is perfectly acceptable to ask someone for recent photos.

Unrealistic profile pictures: A little photo editing is okay. But some people may go above and beyond by altering the picture entirely in programs such as Photoshop. Others may not even show their real photo, using stock images widely available online. Be wary of anyone who looks “too good to be true” - most of us, even supermodels, have a few physical flaws.

Strong feelings early on: Love does not happen in a day. Someone claiming to love you after the first or second email could very likely be trying to scam you or be obsessive if a relationship were to develop.

The words “Western Union”: Western Union is a way to wire money from one location to another. Unfortunately many Western Union scams exist. If someone requests you to send them money via Western Union or other means, even if they offer to send you a check, cease communication with them and report it to the site’s moderators immediately.

Requests for money in general: Many people will “date you online” for a number of weeks or months and suddenly tragedy strikes. Their car broke down, their relative needs an expensive surgery, they just got fired, they were scammed...the list goes on and on. While sure these things happen to many people everyday, you can never be too careful about lending or sending money to someone. If you do give money to someone, be prepared that you may never hear from them again.

Dodgy answers: If you ask someone a question, and they don’t give you an answer or give you conflicting answers, it could be a sign they have something to hide. Many married people pose to be single on these sites, or they may be “working” several other people on the site and get their stories confused.

Meeting Your Date Face to Face

Now that you've researched your date and are ready to meet him or her in person, the next step is to plan your first date. Here are a few tips to have a safe and fun first date.

Choose a well-lit, public place to meet: Restaurants, cafes, outdoor afternoon concerts, a populated area of a park, a museum, or the zoo are all good places to consider a first date. Stay in sight of other people at all times during your first date.

Consider a place where you know the staff: If you choose a place for your first date where you know the staff or have friends who work there, it can be additional security as you can introduce your date to other people who are there. Many people will be discouraged from trying anything if they know they could be recognized.

Meet in the daytime: Why not make your first date for breakfast or lunch? Meeting during the daytime will increase your chances of being in a well-lit public place.

Always take separate cars: If the date is not going well, or you have a strange feeling about the person, having your own car makes it easier to make a quick exit. While being picked up might be romantic, it can also be dangerous.

Never go home with a date: Going to someone's home greatly increases your chances of being taken advantage of since you are no longer in a public place.

Wear comfortable, appropriate clothing: On a first date you should strongly consider wearing clothes you can run in if you need to. You may also want to dress conservatively at first—only things your grandma would approve of.

Bring your charged cell phone: A cell phone is only useful in an emergency if it's fully charged and accessible. Keep it on you at all times and be sure you can get to it easily. It's not a bad idea to have 911 programmed in the speed dial of your phone.

Tell Someone Where You are Going: Be exact about the place and the time and when you expect to be back. You may want to arrange with someone to check up on you periodically or what to do if you don't answer your phone.

Other Ways to Protect Yourself

Limit Yourself to One Drink: It's best to avoid alcohol, but if you feel like you **MUST** drink, then only have 1 drink. Drink it slowly and with a meal. Do not be pressured into drinking more than just 1. If it's hard for you just have one drink, then do not drink at all. If you find your date drinking excessively, take it as a sign to end the date and go home. If your date is too drunk to drive, offer to call the person a cab, but **DO NOT** get into a car with them or let them into your car.

Do not leave drinks or food unattended: It can be very easy for a date to slip something into your drink or food when you're not looking. Wait until you are done eating or drinking to go to the restroom or away from the table. Keep your drink in hand at all times. If you do leave your drink unattended, ask for a new one.

Use the Buddy System: It is okay to bring friends for the first time you meet each other. Not only does this take the pressure off of meeting someone with the expectation to date each other, it also helps you be safer. Just be sure you allow your date to bring a friend also. Another alternative is to have a code phrase you can use on the phone when talking to a friend or relative so they know to send help without your date knowing.

Remain alert: Watch for anything that might seem strange, unusual, or pushy. Do not let your guard down just because you feel comfortable with the person or you have a friend with you. Remember that appearances can be deceiving.

Consider self-defense classes: Many communities offer self defense classes. Some classes can be completed in just a day or weekend, others may span across several weeks or months. There is sure to be a class that meets your budget and schedule. Who knows? You might even meet some new friends while you're there!

Consider carrying pepper spray: Pepper spray is an easy way to stop someone. Be sure you practice using it and understand how it works before the date. Keep it in an easily accessible but hidden spot. If you need to use pepper spray however, you may be better off just running away as quickly as possible rather than trying to fight back.

Early Warning Signs Your Date May Become Abusive

It is not always easy to tell if someone has the potential to become dangerous. However, there are a few signs that may be a red flag that someone could potentially become threatening towards you. If you see any of these warning signs, proceed with caution or consider distancing yourself from the person.

Extreme Jealousy: If you've been seeing a person for 3 weeks and they are already acting jealous about your friends or other people you talk to, it is likely this will only get worse as the relationship progresses.

Controlling Behavior: Your date should want you to be an independent person who is capable of making decisions. If your date tries to control where you go, who you see, what you wear, or other aspects of your life, you should find someone who will let you be who you really are.

Unpredictable Mood Swings: If your date is as sweet as pie one minute and angry the next, he or she could have problems controlling his or her own behavior. This could possibly put you in a dangerous situation if you find yourself with him or her during a bad swing.

Cruel to animals, children, or other people: Someone who is cruel to any living thing has the possibility to also be cruel to you.

Verbally abusive: There should never be any name calling in any relationship. Do not waste your time with someone who only puts you down time after time.

Use of Drugs or Alcohol: Drugs and alcohol can affect a person's mood and their personalities. Some people become very violent or aggressive when drinking or going through withdrawal, even if they are normally happy people. If a date is using drugs or alcohol, it is best to not continue a relationship with them.

Reacting in a Dangerous Situation

Hopefully all of us will never have to worry about what to do if we find ourselves in a dangerous situation. However, it is always good to be prepared so if the need should ever arise you know what to do.

Lie: Honesty is not the best policy when you are in danger. If you are being pressured into sex or to go somewhere, make up any excuse you can think of. I knew a friend who told someone she had AIDS after being in a dangerous situation. If this works in getting them to stop leave the situation as soon as you can.

Make Noise: Call as much attention as you can. Yell, scream, stomp, shout, pull a fire alarm. The attention in some cases will cause the person to flee or attract others to assist you.

Put up a struggle: Never let your date forcefully put you in a car or take you somewhere else. You may not be able to get away once you are in the person's car. Kick, bite, spit, scratch—whatever it takes to break free and run.

Run away at your first chance: It is always better to escape unharmed than try to fight the attacker. Don't be tempted to try and get your purse or other belongings. Your life is worth more than any material possession.

Don't go home and make sure no one is following you: Find a friend or relative to stay with for the night. If you suspect someone may be following your car, drive directly to the nearest police station or a crowded, well-lit place. Make sure your doors and windows are locked.

Report it immediately: Whatever has happened to you, don't be ashamed to get help. This can be difficult to admit to and many people do not want to call more attention to the issue. However getting help is important, not only for your own well-being, but also for others who may come into contact with the same person. Call a crisis hotline in your phone book, 911, or a friend or relative you can trust.

Dating Safety Resources

Want more information on dating safety? Here is a list of resources for more information on dating safety and protecting yourself:

RAINN

www.rainn.org

The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network has an excellent website and toll-free number 1-800-656-HOPE for preventing and dealing with dating violence.

The National Center for Victims of Crime

www.ncvc.org

NCVC has many resources available on preventing and dealing with violence or abuse. Their helpline is 1-800-FYI-CALL.

ACADV

www.acadv.org

The Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence has many dating safety tips for teens and adults alike.

U.S. Department of Women's Health

www.4woman.gov/

The U.S. Department of Women's Health provides many resources for women and men about dating violence, rape, and safety.

We encourage you to share this eBook with anyone who may consider it useful.

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