

## The Art of Asking

Once an attraction is noticed, either person can take the next step.

### HOW DO YOU ASK?

**Some people ask outright.** They just suggest getting together.

*"I'm usually pretty straightforward—I'd like to call you sometime, can I have your number?" or "Do you want to go for coffee or to a movie?"*

**Some people open the door.** They might not feel comfortable asking directly. They might be more subtle or indirect.

*"It's pretty easy to encourage an invitation. I might say, 'I noticed you jogging, I'm a runner too,' or 'I've been wanting to see that movie, too.'"*

*"I just make it obvious I'll say yes if I'm asked—with body language, by listening, by being interested."*

### WHO DOES THE ASKING?

**When the couple is a man and woman, the man often is expected to be the asker.**

*"Men are put in the role of being dominant. We're kind of expected to initiate the date."*

*"A lot of women feel that if we ask directly, it might seem like we can't get someone to ask us out."*

**People also make their own rules to fit their feelings and the circumstances.**

*"I've asked guys out. A lot of men are threatened by it, but it works out, because I'm not really interested in a guy who's threatened by a woman asking him out."*

## What About Sex?

**Sexual attraction is usually a part of dating.** Having sexual *feelings* about a date is common. But when or whether the attraction leads to having sex is up to both individuals.

### Some guidelines:

**Are you both ready?** Agreeing to have sex because you feel pressured can complicate a relationship.

*"I'm not having sex at all for now. In my experience, sex can really mess up a relationship if you make a choice too quickly, or based on the wrong reasons."*

**Can you talk about it?** Talking about sex can be more intimate than having sex. If you feel embarrassed or reluctant to discuss limits, protection, likes and dislikes, chances are it's too soon to have sex.

*"I always bring up sex before it happens, talk about it. I think people like knowing the other person cares."*

**Does sex have the same meaning for both of you?** If one person feels sex is a serious commitment and the other doesn't, it can cause conflict.

*"I'm monogamous about sex. I explain that I expect the same from a partner before I have sex."*

## What's in a Name?

Dating can seem like an old-fashioned term. But most people know what it means and many people use it.

It's also called:

- Hooking up
- Hanging out
- Getting together
- Going out
- Seeing each other
- Looking for love
- Being an item
- Doing something together

# Dating

## What's Normal

## What's Not



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# Getting to Know Someone...

*It can be exhilarating, puzzling, intimidating or fun—sometimes all at the same time.*

## Why Can Dating Be Confusing?

- **You don't know the other person** and the other person doesn't know you.
- **You want to be liked** and accepted.
- **You may be afraid** of doing or saying something dumb or inappropriate.
- **You may be hoping a relationship** will grow out of the date.

Even confident, experienced daters deal with the jitters. Knowing the options in getting acquainted can help.

## The Dating Continuum

You can have a date anywhere along the continuum of a relationship—from “just met” to “married.” The nature of a date changes as you get to know more about each other.

- **You meet.** You're drawn to someone who seems drawn to you. Attraction often seems mysterious and unexplainable. It can be a very romantic stage.
- **You go out.** At first, you have only a few clues about who the person is. Dating is a good way to gather information.
- **You go out again.** Each time you go out you learn more about each other—your likes, your dislikes...what you agree and disagree on... whether you enjoy spending time together.
- **You make decisions** as you learn more about each other. Do you still like this person? Do you want another date? How do you work out differences? Do you want to be closer?

“Studying together probably isn't a date. Unless you go outside to gaze at the stars....”

The dating process is different for each couple and for each individual. Getting to know someone can take hours, weeks, months or years. The combinations and possibilities make dating fun and challenging.

## It's a Personal Thing

When it comes to dating, you pretty much **make your own rules**, based on who you are, where you are in your life and what you want.

Freedom to date can be exciting. It also means you're responsible for taking care of yourself in some potentially charged situations.

**Some things to keep in mind:**

- **Intimacy takes practice.** Dating teaches you about someone else. It gives you practice in relating to another person. You also find out a lot about yourself!

“If you kiss, it's definitely a date.”

## Is This a Date?

**You can date in a group...**

Going out together with a lot of people could be a date, especially in the beginning. A party, a lecture, the movies or a concert are good ways to start getting to know each other.

**Or alone together...**

At some point you'll want to spend time alone to talk and focus on each other.

**Sometimes a date might just happen...**

You may meet someone you like and decide to go do something together. You may run into someone you know at an event or on campus and spend time together.

**Other dating ideas:** Go to a coffee shop or out to dinner. Walk around the city/town/campus. Hike, bike or take a drive. Hang out at a park, beach, lake or playground. Go to a museum, aquarium or zoo.

- **Decide what you want.** You might date to meet people, to have companionship, or to find a serious relationship. Knowing what you want from dating can help you make your best choices.
- **Respect yourself and others.** It's easy to get hurt emotionally—or to hurt someone else—while dating. Be trustworthy and communicate honestly with others. Require them to do the same for you.

## The Etiquette of Paying

Who pays for a date is sometimes an issue.

It may reflect changes in the ways couples—especially men and women—relate to each other:

*“I think whoever invites should pay. Since in our culture mostly men ask, then the man usually pays.”*

*“I was raised with etiquette where the man always pays. Now I'm starting to think this can be sexist. So I've changed my opinion to whoever initiates the date should pay for it.”*

**It may be purely practical:**

*“I don't think it's fair that men are expected to pay, especially since a lot of people are on budgets. As a woman, I feel better about paying my own way.”*

Decide what you think about paying and why. When it seems appropriate, discuss the issue with your date.