

How to survive online dating in 5 steps

Emily Cowan

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Online dating is a rollercoaster adventure. But while it's exciting, it can also leave you feeling a bit bamboozled. What does a successful profile look like? What is the right etiquette? And how can I pick the right person when there are so many options?

[https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/1200x630_GettyImages-817537888.jpg]

As mid-life ex-wife blogger [Stella Grey](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/nov/15/my-mid-life-adventures-online-dating) puts it, "it's a great big dance hall, though without the alcohol or the band. Or the hall." Online dating is an excellent way to meet people, but you can't just leave it up to chance.



Yes, online dating can be hard, but it doesn't have to be difficult. In this step-by-step guide, we've rounded up five pieces of advice to help you stay cool-headed on your online dating journey.

1. Make a wish list

Whether you've already got your profile up and running, or haven't yet taken the plunge, take a step away from your screen. Set some time aside to think about you. What do you want from online dating?

"Many of us answer the questions on dating sites aspirationally rather than honestly. We think about idealized versions of ourselves and paint a skewed profile, often not on purpose," says [Amy Webb](https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/jan/28/why-data-secret-successful-dating), the data scientist and journalist who [hacked online dating](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_webb_how_i_hacked_online_dating). Her advice is to create a [wishlist](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/mar/18/online-dating-10-rules-partner-profile) and be specific.

This is less about whether they prefer Jilly Cooper to Dostoevsky, but more about what stage of life you're both at and where you want to be. Do you really want someone who's about to head off on a six-month trek around South America when you've just been given a promotion?

This wishlist will help you to define what you want - and make it a smoother process to sort through the many matches and profiles.

2. Give your profile a makeover

You've now put yourself out there into the world wide web - great! But maybe you're not getting as many matches or replies as you'd have liked. See that you're getting the attention you deserve by making your profile the best it can be.

Read through your profile aloud and ask the question: would you want to date you? The most successful profiles tend to be about 100 words long and use positive language. You'll come across as intriguing and everyone who sees it will want to know more.

You can also check out a list of our [dos and don'ts](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/dating-locations/dating/the-dos-and-don-ts-of-writing-the-perfect-dating-profile#.WwVPNVVw) for Soulmates profiles, plus some excellent advice on how to [pick the perfect photographs](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/the-11-dating-profile-photos-no-one-wants-to-see#.WwVPaFMvw) to show you at your best.

3. Start writing

Now your profile's looking good, it's time to start talking to people. [Writing your first message](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/online-dating-what-should-be-your-opening-message#.WxEZq1MvyL4) can be a bit of minefield, but luckily dating online means you a chance to plan first.

While it can be hard to know what to write, there are a few [simple rules](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/how-to-message-someone-on-a-dating-site#.WxEZqFMvyL4) to play by. Avoid sending the same identical message to everyone and anyone - this happens too often on dating sites and you're likely to be ignored. Pay attention to the details on profiles to work out hobbies, likes and dislikes. Show them that you're interested by asking a question.

This may not seem like the most spontaneous or romantic approach, but if it gets results then what's to lose?

4. Move offline quickly

Cut short the screen time and move into real life as soon as you can. While it's important to get to know your match before you meet, save the best conversation for the first date. This can be tricky, and it's easy to get carried away when emailing or chatting online.

Try not to check your messages too regularly and plan a first date if you like them. If they'd rather keep things in the virtual realm, then don't compromise. Save yourself the time, energy and potential heartbreak by moving on. You can tell if they're interested by checking their behaviour against our list of [signs your match likes you](#) [<https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/three-signs-your-online-dating-match-likes-you#.WwaTwIMvx-U>].

5. Be forgiving on the first date

If everything's gone to plan (and you haven't lost the will to live in the process) you'll have secured yourself a date. Expectations are high. For both parties this is exciting, but also nerve-racking, and can be difficult to [know how to behave](#) [<https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/first-dates-just-be-yourself#.Wwa88FMvx-V>]. It's not uncommon for stress get the better of you and affect the way you come across. In situations loaded with so much anticipation, people are rarely relaxed and find it difficult to be the best version of themselves.

Many of our members, like [Helen](#) [<https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/success-stories/success-on-soulmates-helen-and-robert>], have told us of the brilliant people they met before finding their soulmate. Meeting new people, making real connections and going on fun and interesting dates are all part of the journey. Thinking about it this way will take the mounting pressure off finding "The One" and you'll be able to relax, enjoy the experience and let the best version of you shine.

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