

- **When to meet up.** Some people like to meet up right away, and some people like to take some time. Either way is fine. Being flexible or patient about when you get together can help relieve pressure and let people feel less nervous and more excited!
- **Where and when to meet.** It can be helpful to be specific with the details: where will you meet? What time? What will you do? You might want to consider somewhere a bit public for your first meeting that you'd feel comfortable leaving at any time (a place you can get to and leave on your own without needing a ride). Sharing where you're going and how long you'll be there with someone you trust can also be a useful safety tool.
- **Who pays?** Everyone has their own idea about who should or shouldn't pay for things on a date. If you have specific expectations about who should pay, you may want to communicate that before meeting up or consider being prepared to pay for your own food, drinks, or entry fees, etc.
- **Planning ahead.** If you think you might drink or use drugs, it might be helpful to have a plan to keep track of things like your wallet and phone, and a way home. Drinking and drugs can also impact your decision making around sexual readiness, so consider talking about sexual boundaries and expectations beforehand.

Despite all your preparation, you can't predict how you'll feel when you're actually with someone. Even if you put a lot of expectation and pressure on yourself, things might happen completely differently than you thought. You might end up ending the date or hookup earlier than you would've hoped, or end up spending the night with them when you didn't think you would. If you feel uncomfortable, know that it's okay to leave at any time. Trust your own judgement.

For youth ages 13-29

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services

Offers drop-in and scheduled appointments
Call 416-961-0113 or visit www.ppt.on.ca

For youth ages 13-19

Teen Health Source

Offers anonymous and confidential sexual health information for teens by teens.
Text (647) 905-6455, call (416) 961-3200, email teenhealthsource@ppt.on.ca
Chat online and visit www.teenhealthsource.com

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sexual pleasure series

dating & hooking up: apps & the internet

There are lots of ways to meet new people you might want to date: in class, through friends, at a party, etc. More and more, though, people are meeting online or through apps*. Some people may find it a bit overwhelming, but dating online is not that much different than dating offline. Still, it can help to have some pointers, so here are some things to keep in mind when seeking out hookups and relationships on the internet.

Navigating the World of Online Dating

Communicating online is a pretty central part of most dating these days, but can look a lot different than how we communicate in person. If you're new to dating online, or feel like it's all a bit strange to you, this factsheet might clear some things up!

Where to go?

Popular dating apps include but are not limited to Hinge, Tinder, Grindr, Bumble or Feeld_(which people download to their phones). Some of these apps are mainly used for hooking up, but lots of people are using them to meet new friends or start relationships. Even if an app is advertised as being for one or the other, people will still use them how they see fit. Users typically set up a basic profile (sometimes logging in through existing social media accounts), and connect people within a geographic radius (using your phone's GPS).

Most apps require you to upload pictures of yourself, and fill out a short profile. These apps are often free, but can include paid features. How you connect with others might depend on the app—some operate on a grid of profiles, others have profiles you swipe through to match, and some might even show a map of profiles near you.

These apps are built to keep you engaged. Features will often be designed to encourage you to keep scrolling, keep swiping, and keep

the app open. This is good to keep in mind if you start to find yourself spending more time than you'd like being online.

Your Profile

No matter how brief or detailed, your profile says a lot about you. Everything from the photos you choose to how you describe yourself or even your screen name can affect how people interact with you. Here are some things to think about when creating your profile:

- **How much information do you put online?** Some people share a lot about themselves, and some people say very little. The important thing is that you're aware of what you're sharing, and that you're comfortable with what you're putting out. See PPT's [Social Media Safety](#) factsheet for more information.
- **What are you looking for?** Looking for a long-term relationship? Friends? Just sex? It can be helpful to know what you're looking for, and even communicate that on your profile, but you may not be looking for the same thing with everyone you talk to, and it can be tricky to navigate conversations with mismatched expectations..
- **Accuracy and safety.** What you share and how you share it is totally up to you! However, misrepresenting yourself with the information you share, including pictures, can make it hard to establish trust with other people. Consider what kinds of information or photos you feel comfortable and safe sharing online.
- **When do you talk about sex?** This can vary from person to person, some apps are meant to facilitate sexual connection, others might not be but people may still want to use sexier pictures or language in conversations or profiles to find partners. Talk about sex when you want to talk about sex, and know that everyone has a different idea of when it's appropriate to do so. Regardless, sexting still requires consent.

When You Find Someone You Like

- **Initiating conversation.** You've found someone you like! Now to start the conversation. Sometimes a simple hey what's up does the trick, but you could also try talking about a mutual interest, something that stands out about someone's profile, or just whatever's on your mind at that moment. Everyone has different preferences for how to start a conversation, and people might not respond for lots of different reasons. Rejection is hard, but it's part of getting to know people. Try not to take it personally if a

connection you're excited about doesn't work out. See PPT's [Rejection](#) factsheet for more information.

- **Respecting boundaries.** Everyone has boundaries. Some people like to take relationships slow, or want to be friends first, etc. Consider talking to the person about their boundaries and sharing your boundaries so you can better understand and respect where each other is coming from. See PPT's [Boundaries](#) factsheet for more information.
- **Being sex positive.** People share and express their sexuality online differently. Being sex positive is respecting someone's sexual expression. People don't share their sexual orientations, their relationship statuses, or their profile pictures to be judged or harassed. They do it so that they can connect with people who are interested in the same things..
- **Everyone communicates differently.** Some people use apps really passively, some people make dating apps more of a priority, some people are attentive, and some match without thinking or caring, it really depends! A match does not guarantee a conversation, and not getting a match or response in a day or two doesn't mean it won't ever happen. If someone's communication style just isn't matching up with how you like to communicate, you aren't obligated to continue a conversation hoping it'll change.
- **Doing your own research.** If you had a crush on someone that your friends knew, you might ask them for info about that person. Looking someone up online can help you get a better sense of a person if you're feeling unsure. You might check out someone's public Instagram or Tiktok but be careful to not go overboard and invade someone's privacy.
- **Knowing if it's a match.** Virtually connecting on an app doesn't necessarily mean you're a good fit. You might match and not even start a conversation, you might exchange a few messages that don't go anywhere, and you might be unsure but feel that meeting in person would give you a better idea. If you're on the fence, consider talking to friends about this person.

Meeting Up IRL

Some people like to meet up right away, others like to take their time and get to know each other a bit more virtually. Do what feels comfortable for you. You might find it easier to navigate if you're flexible with timelines.