

# How to Be a Better Date: Expert Advice for Single and Married Women

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Are you a good date? Being an accomplished dater is a critical skill to finding romance as well as keeping a relationship fun, healthy and interesting over time. All of us—regardless of our marital status—could use some advice about how to amp up our powers of charm and connection. So, with the help of two of Chicago's most knowledgeable dating experts, let's learn how to create some enjoyable one-on-one time with our special (or potentially special) someone.

## Advice for Committed Chicks

It's wonderful to have a stable sweetie, but that doesn't mean you should take each other for granted romantically, because things can get stale and boring fast. Follow these four steps to make date night a great night.

**1. Make Actual Plans.** Chicago matchmaking and dating expert **Stef Safran**, owner of **Stef and the City** says, "You can't fly by the seat of your pants when it comes to your social life; you have to make plans." Safran has a service for singles where she creates a personalized social plan for them. "Single people expect a date to be planned and fun." Dates should be special for partnered people too—enough with the pizza on the couch already! Get concert tickets, reserve a table at a cool spot, or check out Groupon offers for ideas of new activities to try. Doing something stimulating will make your time together more exciting.

**2. Dress Up.** In a recent interview, actress **Eva Mendes** joked that sweatpants were the number one cause of divorce in America. She has a point. We should present our best self to our mate from time to time. According to noted dating coach and "Steve Harvey Show" (*com*) regular **Bela Gandhi**, President of **Smart Dating Academy**, straight men are turned on by femininity, so take a page from the single woman's book and get girly. Get a manicure, a blowout, put on some lipstick and wear a pencil skirt or a figure-hugging dress. "It makes your partner feel respected when you look good for him," Gandhi says. Plus, dressing up makes you feel good about yourself, and that's hot.

**3. Be Interesting.** Rehashing everyday subjects like kids, money, chores, work or family can put a damper on a fun evening. Both Safran and Gandhi advise their clients to prepare conversation topics about current events, pop culture, travel and sports, which is good advice for partnered people too. "Be interesting," Safran says, "don't go into housewife mode." By exploring new topics, you'll discover more about each other.

**4. Put Sex on the Table.** Intimacy is an important part of a healthy long-term relationship, and an evening alone is the perfect opportunity to celebrate all the ways you connect with your beloved. Savor the conversation and romance, but save time and energy for the bedroom—or whatever sexy locale you come up with.

## Advice for Single Babes

Take heart, ladies. If you really want a relationship, chances are you'll find one. There are 107 million single adults in America and technology has made it easier than ever to find a match. "Love exists for every single person that wants it," Gandhi says. "If you want love, you can find it." Here are four guidelines for dating success.

**1. Have a good attitude.** Showing up to a date with a positive, confident attitude is the number one thing you can do to assure the date goes well, Gandhi says. "It's all about confidence. Your mood is infectious." Assume the guy already likes you and show up with the expectation that you're going to have a good time together, and voilà, you will.

**2. Give him approval.** Being a good date means making your date feel good about himself. "I want to make my date feel like a million bucks," says Gandhi. "The best way to get someone to like you is to like them first." So show some warmth, greet the guy with a hug, and look for what's good in him and tell him.

**3. Don't expect perfection or instant chemistry.** Safran says, "Singles have this fantasy that everything is going to be perfect on a first date. It's unrealistic." She advises single women to have fewer expectations and criteria for their date and to give the budding relationship time. "There's no short cut when it comes to getting to know [some]one." Not feeling chemistry? Good, says Gandhi, who believes butterflies and fireworks are often old dating patterns coming up in your body and represent anxiety. "The right person should take the knot out of your stomach."

**4. Embrace old-fashioned values.** Hey, you're a grown woman. If you want to hook up with your hot date after dinner and a movie, no one's saying you can't. But if you're looking for a relationship that will last, sex too soon is a bad strategy, advises Gandhi. "Our rule for both women and men is 'sex-clusivity.' No sex until you're exclusive." All those tumultuous emotions and sensations that arise with a new lover can actually lead to poor decision making when finding a life partner.

So get out there and use these techniques for more enjoyable dates and happier relationships. For more on our experts' services and media appearances, check out their websites.