

What Is Dating?

The definition of dating has changed with time and can still differ from culture to culture. In modern-day America, the term "dating" is most often used to refer to two people who are in a romantic relationship. (1) In some places, people date with the express intent of seeing if the two people are a good fit for marriage, which is sometimes called "courting."

When people are dating they spend time together getting to know each other. This includes talking about interests, hobbies, and family backgrounds. The intention of dating is to get a deeper understanding of the other person and determine whether there's potential for a relationship. This relationship could be short term and casual or long term and serious, and it's up to the people involved to determine what they're looking for.

Dates can range from meeting up for coffee or going to dinner and a movie to taking a class together or going for a hike. Some people prefer to go on individual dates, with just the other person, but others may participate in group dates where an entire group of people go out together. Group dates may be more casual and less intimidating.

Types of Dating

Because the definition of dating depends so much on the culture and people involved, there can be almost limitless types and subtypes of dating. Below are three basic categories that most dating relationships can fit into: (2)

- **Serious.** Serious dating is when both parties are dating with the intention of a deeper future relationship. This is often marriage, but it doesn't have to be. Many serious dating relationships are monogamous, but some may also fall into the ethical nonmonogamy category below.
- **Casual.** Casual dating is when both people aren't looking for anything serious and are just spending time with someone they like. These relationships can be purely physical with no intention of a long-term emotional connection, but it's also common for people to casually date in the beginning stages of their relationship before they decide to commit to a more serious one.
- **Ethical nonmonogamy.** Ethical nonmonogamy is a blanket term that describes relationships where one or both of the people involved are also seeing other people. Both people are aware of the other relationships and have expressly consented to the arrangement. (3)

Tips for Dating

Dating can be intimidating, but there are ways to make it easier and more comfortable. Here are a few dating tips that can help: (2)

- **Being authentic.** It's normal for someone to want to put on the best version of themselves when meeting someone new, and there's nothing inherently wrong with that. But no one should feel like they have to change themselves or hide interests or parts of their personality

to make them more "dateable." Staying true to who they are and being open and honest can help those interested in dating have a more positive experience and increase the chances of finding someone who appreciates them for who they really are.

- **Not revealing too much information too soon.** There are people who date with nefarious intentions or misrepresent who they are to get closer to certain people. It's important to let a relationship grow organically and not give away too much early on in the relationship. For example, some predators use dating apps to find single parents as a way to gain access to their children.
- **Getting outside opinions.** It's easy to ignore red flags when someone is in the early stages of a relationship. Everything is new and exciting, and someone may be more likely to explain away something a partner did instead of seeing it as a warning sign. Having a few friends or close family members to confide in can ensure that someone in the dating scene can get honest feedback from people who love them and want what's best for them.
- **Having a list of target qualities.** Before jumping into the dating game, it can help to make a list of the qualities that are important in a partner. Someone doesn't have to check all of these boxes to be a match, but it can provide an objective filter to ensure a potential partner meets the major criteria.

The Best Dating Sites and Apps

Plenty of dating apps exist, but they aren't all created equally. The right app depends on what kind of partner and relationship someone is looking for and how they prefer to communicate. Here are a few of the most popular dating websites: (4)

- **Hinge.** This app is tailored toward people who want to eventually be in a serious relationship. Users can connect with singles in their area, and if they pay for the premium version, they can filter out matches based on things such as height, political affiliation, religion, and how far away they are.
- **Tinder.** One of the original mainstream dating apps, Tinder is most commonly used to find casual relationships. (5)
- **Bumble.** Bumble puts a twist on traditional dating apps by only letting women make the first move. Both sides can swipe and match, but once a match is made, it's up to the woman to start the conversation. Some users prefer this, as it limits the influx of messages many women get when signing up for a dating app. (6)
- **eHarmony.** This app takes a different approach to dating and claims to be able to scientifically match users based on compatibility. Users take a fairly lengthy quiz when they sign up and then are able to view their most compatible matches and start conversations.
- **Happn.** Happn is similar to other dating apps in that it lets you connect with local singles. Only those who mutually like each other can chat, and the app encourages video dates before the real-life version to ensure that everyone is on the same page and is who they say they are.

Sources

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