

The Do's and Don'ts of Starting a Relationship

Many people want to be in a romantic relationship but don't know how to get one started. If this sounds like you, it's important to first look at your reasons for wanting to be in a relationship. Is it because many of your friends have boyfriends or girlfriends? Perhaps you're lonely? Maybe you want to prove something? Or are your friends pressuring you to have sex? *These aren't good reasons to start a relationship.* You need to recognize that it's okay, even healthy, not to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. There are many benefits to being just friends. But if you find yourself attracted to someone and don't know how to start up a relationship with him/her, here are some suggestions:

DO	DON'T
Be confident. This is easier said than done. Practice your assertiveness skills, remind yourself of all your strengths, and work on your self-esteem with "positive self-talk."	Wait for someone you're interested in to come to you. It's okay for guys or girls to make the first move.
Notice something about the person you are interested in – something you have in common or something you can compliment him/her on. But don't fake it; be sincere when you give compliments.	Use teasing, obnoxious "playing around", or "only kidding" to get another person's attention.
Ask the person to do something "non-threatening" like going out with a group of mutual friends.	Play "hard to get" or other mind games.
Avoid being isolated with a person you don't know that well. If the person agrees to go out, then meet and hang out in a public place.	Make a judgment about someone based on what group they hang out with, whether they are popular or not, or what your friends would say about him/her.
Show interest in the other person. Ask about his/her likes and dislikes, family and friends, values and beliefs, and goals and dreams.	Be aggressive or come on too strong. Don't try to force someone into going out with you.
Be honest about who you are and what you want out of the relationship. Of course, this requires knowing yourself first!	Go alone to the other person's house, get in a car alone with him/her, or become isolated with someone you don't know very well.
Call when you say you will – be true to yourself.	Spend all night talking about previous girlfriends/boyfriends.
Be very careful about meeting people through the Internet. If you are going to meet face-to-face, always do it in a public place with friends around.	Get drunk or high in order to "loosen up" and be confident on a date. Chances are you will wind up regretting it.
Trust your instincts. If you're uncomfortable with a person or a situation, don't be afraid to do what you need to do to feel safe.	Send mixed messages, especially about sex. Be aware of your body language and other non-verbal communication. Set clear boundaries.
Bring your own money on a date and be prepared to pay. This way you don't "owe them" anything.	Pressure anyone into having sex, or get them drunk or high in order to get them to have sex. Remember that date rape includes using verbal coercion such as threats or manipulation, drugs and alcohol, or physical force to get someone to have sex when they do not want to.
Be aware of the signs of an unhealthy relationship.	Do anything you don't want to, including anything sexual just because you want the other person to like you or don't want to hurt his/her feelings.
Accept "no" for an answer. If the person seems unsure about whether to go out with you, take the time to get to know each other better. However if he/she has clearly said that he's/she's not interested, then respect the decision and move on.	Repeatedly badger the person, "stalk", or use mutual friends to communicate with the person once he/she has expressed no interest.

