

Cyber Relationships: Tips for Successful Online Dating

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my work is helping people find—and keep—love in their lives. With online dating growing by leaps and bounds, I've had the pleasure of helping many people create an online profile that will help them attract the right person. This month, I'm going to walk you through how to write an incredible online profile, including the Profile Dos & Don'ts, as well as Cyber Dating Safety.

For those of you already in a relationship, you might play with the idea of taking the tips shared here to write up a “mock profile” and ask your partner to do the same. Then exchange them with each other and see if there are things you and your partner can discover or re-discover about each other's wants, needs, and desires. ♥

Getting Started

Most dating websites will have you begin with a Username or a “handle.” Try to choose something that is personal, unique, and interesting. You want to pick something that will attract people to your profile and tell them a little something about you. For example, “Delaware1969” is NOT going to attract people, or tell them much about you. Conversely, “Skydiving Diva” is intriguing, and tells them a bit about you!

After the username, the “title” or “tagline” is the next thing people will look at while deciding to read your profile or not. Again, try to make it something that is thoughtful, intriguing, and/or funny (if that's your personality). Try to stay away from clichés and quotes from books or movies. You want to set yourself apart from the dozens of other profiles the person may be reading that day.

The next most important part of the profile (before many people will even *look* at your profile) is your picture. Use a photo that has been taken recently and in some way shows off your personality. This will be discussed further in the “Dos” sections below.

General Guidelines

There are generally three main sections of any good profile: “About Me,” “A Potential Partner,” and “Deal breakers.” In the “About Me” section of your profile, you want to tell the reader who you are, what you are interested in, what hobbies you enjoy, your dreams or goals in life, and (if applicable) who you want to be, as you move through life's journey. Use this section to tell the

reader a story about who you are, what you've already learned from life, and where you think you might be headed.

In the "Potential Partner" section, you have to know what you are looking for in a partner. Take some time to sit down and really think about what you are looking for in a mate. Are you just looking for a date? A relationship? Or an "intimate encounter" (a.k.a. one-night-stand; a.k.a. "booty call"). In addition, what kind of personality type are you looking for? What interests are you hoping they might have? Finally, include characteristics you find attractive, for example, "down-to-earth, honest, hard-working" etc. If you have physical attributes that you find particularly attractive, this is also something you may want to include. But be careful that you aren't SO specific, that you scare away people by looking shallow or too picky. You're *ideal* person might be 5' 8" but if they are 5' 7" is it really a deal-breaker? And fellas, nothing is more of a turn-off to women than giving bust-waist-hip sizes in your description of an *ideal* partner. Unless you are looking for Barbie, saying something like "athletic build" or "height-weight proportionate" is much more of an appropriate descriptor and MUCH less offensive. 😊

Deal Breakers are things you absolutely cannot live with (or in some cases, without). These are things that you are not willing to compromise on. For example: drugs, children, relocating, smoking, etc. If you have strong beliefs about something and you know that they aren't going to change, don't waste your time (or theirs!) by leaving it out of the profile. If you want to have children, say so! If the person has to be financially stable, be up front about it.

Online Profile Dos:

- * Self-Promote. Highlight things about yourself that are your strengths—things you excel at or have a lot of experience doing. If self-promoting is something that is difficult for you, ask a friend to help you create a list. Try to narrow it down to your three favorite things about yourself.
- * Tell stories with details, rather than just using one-word adjectives. When describing the three things you love about yourself, give descriptive examples of those things in your profile. For example, instead of saying, "I'm adventurous," share some details of your favorite adventure! You want them to read a story that exemplifies what *being* adventurous is, for you.
- * Do give examples and brief explanations. If you love movies, name some of your favorites, and why you love them. If you love to travel, share some of the places you've been and places you're hoping to visit in the future.
- * Do include a profile picture that is full body length, and shows your personality. For example, if you love camping, hiking, biking, etc., then be sure to include a photo that was taken with you out in nature. And if your Username is "SkyDivingDiva," you may want to:

1) actually have some experience sky diving, and 2) include a picture of you sky diving, if you're lucky enough to have captured one.

Online Profile Don'ts:

- * Don't lie. Be honest about your age, relationship status, body type, etc.
- * Don't use an old, outdated, or inaccurate photo of yourself. Moreover, don't use just a "head shot." In general, people want to see all of you and a partial picture tends to make people think you are trying to hide something.
- * Don't be wishy-washy on a Deal Breaker. There is a reason why they are called "DEAL BREAKERS."
- * Don't use photos of yourself with other people—particularly an ex. If it is your favorite picture of yourself, crop them out!
- * Did I mention, DON'T LIE?!

Online Dating Safety Tips:

Online dating can be unsafe. It is simply too easy for people to not be who they "say" they are. Don't let cyber dating turn into cyber stalking (or worse!). Here are several easy to follow safety tips:

- Never give out your personal information, such as address, phone number, name of the company you work for, etc. in a profile or in early conversations. Definitely do not give out your social security number, credit card information, or any other banking information.
- Be patient in the beginning. Take your time and ask a lot of questions before taking the leap to give them your phone number or to meet in person.
- ALWAYS meet in a public place.
- Make sure that you have given a friend the name and address of the place where you'll be meeting the person (as well as any information you have about who you will be meeting).
- Have a "safe call" with a "safe word." A safe call is a call from the aforementioned friend, at a designated time where they will expect you to mention a word in the conversation that indicates you are feeling safe with the person you are with. For example, have a friend call you approximately an hour into the date, and choose a word you can slip into the

conversation that lets them know you feel like you are safe. If you don't use that word, you're safe call person should act immediately to ensure your safety.

- Never get in the car with your new date or go home with them on the first date. Again, think public place. If your goal is an “intimate encounter” rather than a date or relationship, it is still better to go to a hotel, where there is security personnel and security cameras, rather than back to someone's home.

Online Dating Sites

GENERAL:

OkCupid.com and PlentyofFish.com are both **free** dating websites.

Chemistry.com and Match.com are paid websites, however, they offer a bit more to consumers as far as how they match you, and because you have to pay for them, they help to weed out people that may not be serious about dating/relationships.

SPECIFIC POPULATIONS:

SeniorPeopleMeet.com (for ages 50+)

JDate.com (for Jewish Singles)

ChrisitanMingle.com (for Christian Singles—not LGBT friendly)

RainbowChristians.com (for Christian Singles, including LGBT)

Meetherhere.com (for Lesbian Singles)

GayMeeting.com (for Gay Males)

BisexualPassions.com (for Bisexual Singles)

TGPersonals.com (for Transgendered Singles)

BrainiacDating.com (for “sexy & smart” Singles)

SoulSingles.com (for African American, Haitian, Jamaican, and Black Singles)

BlackPeopleMeet.com (for African American Singles)

Additional Resources (Books):

“I Can’t Believe I’m Buying This Book: A Commonsense Guide to Successful Internet Dating”

~by Evan M. Katz

“The Boomer’s Guide to Online Dating” ~by Judsen Culbreth

“How to Meet Your Match Online” ~by Laura Henderson

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Dr. Dianna Palimere is a Psychosexual therapist and Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She has been in the field of mental health for the past 11 years, dedicating the past six years to specializing in clinical sexuality. She holds a Bachelors degree in Psychology, a Masters degree in Social Work, a Masters degree in Human Sexuality Education, and a PhD in Clinical Human Sexuality. Utilizing a holistic approach to therapy, she incorporates a variety of clinical interventions in her work with individuals, couples, and families. She is devoted to helping people achieve sexual health and healing through her work as a psychotherapist in her private practice in Pike Creek, DE; as well as in her work with local nonprofit organizations. To learn more about her or to schedule an appointment, visit her website:

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