
Start with coffee

New online daters have shared that they are concerned about accepting a date with someone and as soon as they meet him, they know he is not a match. If the plan is for dinner, dancing, lunch or hiking, they know they are in for hours of making polite conversation with someone they know is not their type.

The solution: Start with coffee.

If you have not met this man, no matter how charming and fun he sounds on the phone or in emails, start with coffee. If you meet and hit it off, coffee can easily extend to lunch or dinner. I've had 5-hour dates that started with coffee and went into a meal.

Coffee is a minimal time investment: 30 minutes to an hour. You can be polite to nearly anyone for 30 minutes, can't you? Even if you meet and know there is no attraction, fight the urge to exit after 5 or 10 minutes. Unless he is totally offensive, stick it out for 30 minutes. You may make a new pal, or have a gal pal with whom he might be a good match.

I've dissuaded guys who wanted to start with dinner and dancing. I've learned from experience. I now say



“Let’s start with coffee and see if we hit if off and want to spend more time together. Then our second date can be that nice dinner you’re suggesting.” They understand and agree.

If you want to meet after work, a drink would seem logical. However, it is a tad awkward as it gets toward dinner time to decline an offer of dinner if he thinks it is going well. But if you want to bail, don’t do dinner. Extricate yourself as gracefully as possible: “I’m sorry, I must be going.” “I have a big day tomorrow, so want to get ready for it tonight.”

This is why coffee is the perfect solution. For some reason it is less of a problem to leave when your coffee cup is drained. So don’t set up yourself to suffer — agree to start with coffee.

How do you greet him?

When I first started dating, I asked my dating friends, “How do you greet someone upon first meeting?” Shaking hands seems too businesslike. Doing nothing seems cold and aloof.

I’ve settled on a quick hug. Since I’ve often been flirting with potential suitors by phone and email for at least a few days if not a week or more, I feel they aren’t strangers. Heck, if I’m at a church service, I hug people with whom I’ve had much less contact!

Hugging also shows you’re affectionate and not afraid of contact. Just don’t linger too long, or it might send a message you don’t want to send!

If I feel particularly fond of the person from our emails and calls, I’ll kiss him on the cheek. I’ve not had anyone seem offended by this greeting.

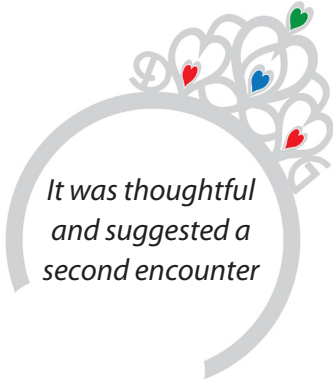
And at the end of the encounter, unless it was unpleasant, I always give him a quick hug too. Longer if we really hit it off, and often a kiss on the cheek. But don’t be too affectionate if you don’t want to see him again. I’ve found even a hug for a pleasant encounter can cause the guy to think you’re more interested than you are.





*Guys make a great
first impression with a
small gift*

A guy's first-date present was a recent bestselling book he thought I'd like. It was a great gift, as it is in the genre I read and hadn't bought yet. Thumbs up!



One guy's first-date gift was a CD of romantic songs to play while cooking together. He said we could play it when we prepare a meal together. Good move — it was thoughtful and suggested a second encounter.

The stuffed bear with a red heart was brought to me on Feb. 16. I knew my date bought it half price, but that didn't diminish its ef-

fect on me. It was very sweet. The guy who brought it and I are now dear friends, so the bear sits in a special place in my bedroom and I think of him and that first date every time I see it.

One man brought a bouquet of flowers. Another brought one red rose which made him stand out. And another brought flowers, a stuffed bear and a “thinking of you” greeting card!

It’s not the gift itself, although if it is a great gift, it’s even better. More it shows thoughtfulness, care and that the guy went out of his way to make the first date memorable. So even if there were other parts of the date that were so-so, a small gift will often tip the scale to ensure a second date.

*Good conversation is
the foundation of great
dating*

One of the things that has stood out for me in dating interactions is that many guys don't know how to make conversation. I'm not just talking chit chat, but any kind of give and take.

And that is precisely what is missing — give and take. The men I've talked to recently seem to be missing the how-to-ask-questions gene. While I admit that since I am curious about a lot of things, questions come more easily to me than for some. I've learned to interject comments, stories and tidbits into the conversation lest my potential suitor think he's being interrogated. But most of them don't know how to piggy back on my comments to draw me out or to continue the discussion. They merely turn it back on themselves or talk about what interests them.

I had a dinner date with a man who did a good



job of sharing the initial phone conversation. However, at dinner he did 85% of the talking. When I would interject, my comments just sat there — he didn't ask me anything further. Perhaps my perspective and life weren't interesting to him. That's certainly a possibility. However, many strangers on planes seem more interested in my life than some of the potential dates I've spoken to!

Are they shy? Nervous? Wanting to tell me everything possible in the first interaction? It would be more engaging if they worked to share the air time. They'd have more luck getting second dates — or even first ones — if they were more conscientious about how they converse in the first conversation.



*He had me from
“You’re gorgeous!”*

In “Jerry McGuire,” Renee Zellweger’s character tells Jerry, “You had me from ‘hello.’” Mine was a little different.

We’d talked a few times on the phone and had nice, but brief, conversations. Although we’d exchanged pictures, I had no idea if I’d be attracted to him or him to me. We agreed to meet at a coffee shop after work.

He called from a block away, telling me he’d be there in a minute. When he walked in the door, I waived. A giant grin filled his face. He walked toward me, his arms extended for a hug. I embraced the invitation! His first words: “You’re gorgeous!” What a great start!

He was tall, well dressed, nice looking, and bald. Bald is sexy on some men — and it certainly was on him. As the evening progressed, I learned he was funny, intelligent, thoughtful, attentive, chivalrous, insightful, accomplished, humble and well educated.

We laughed, smiled and shared. We got so engrossed in each other we forgot to order coffee. He asked good,

interesting questions and listened intently. After asking “Do you like to be touched?” and I responded “Absolutely!” he reached over and took my hand.

After 90 minutes, we walked hand-in-hand down the street and listened to the band playing outside. As we swayed to the music he slipped his arm around my waist. He moved it to the back of my neck, which he tenderly stroked.

He asked if I wanted to have dinner. Yes, I did. While we stood in a corner waiting for the outside table to be cleared, he gently kissed me. Nothing hot and heavy, just a sweet kiss. At the table, he sat in the chair next to me. We held hands throughout dinner.



He told me he liked my dimples. I thanked him. I didn't tell him that I don't have dimples — those are laugh lines, AKA wrinkles! He also said, based on some of my comments, it seemed I wasn't completely happy with the shape of my body. I said yes, that was true, I'd like to lose more weight. He said “I love your body. If you're concerned about any bumps or jiggles, that is what bodies our age are supposed to do.” I wanted to run away with him right then.