
Shopping for men

Dating life can be brutal. You make an effort to look nice (I call it getting “dated up”) to meet someone new, then he either doesn’t contact you afterwards, tells you he’s not attracted to you or there’s none of that elusive “chemistry.” You have to have perseverance and hope that someone for you is right around the corner — or in the next email.

I’ve found dating to be a lot like clothes shopping. First, you have to shop where you know there is a large pool of prospects, which is why people shop at malls. When I conduct an online search, I call it “shopping for men.” On the best dating sites, you can search by important criteria (e.g., age, height, location, income, education, smoking/non-smoking, even activity level). Just like clothes shopping, you know the size, colors and style you want.

And just like clothes shopping, you have to look at LOTS of possibilities, even when you’ve narrowed it down to a certain brand and size. It is easy to get frustrated.

After a day of shopping with no buys, do you say “There are no good clothes out there?” Or “All the good

clothes are taken!” Or “All the clothes I tried on are losers. I’m giving up. I’m never shopping again!” No. How silly.

Would you ever consider stopping shopping? No. You keep shopping because you have hope that you’ll find something you’ll love — that will be comfortable and fit and you’ll feel great in. Same with guys.

However, it can get wearisome going on a bunch of dates with guys who on paper seem a good match, but in person there’s no spark. You can doubt your attractiveness, or think you are too picky. If you find no one you can entertain the possibility of going out with again, then perhaps it is time to reassess your criteria.

For example, I thought I must have a college graduate. Then I dated a delightful gentleman who didn’t complete college as he was recruited to be a CEO while in college. He is very bright, but was tapped before completing his degree. I then found other fun men who were successful despite not having a degree.

Did I “settle” for less by lowering my criteria to allow for those who didn’t complete college? I don’t think so. If you’re having a hard time in your shopping activities, consider if some of your criteria could be altered.

It's raining men!

“Ten men waiting for me at the door? Send one of them home. I’m tired.” —Mae West

One of the beauties of online dating is it seems there is a never-ending supply of potential suitors. At least that’s my experience. And I have pretty stringent criteria for my matches. Yes, I get 10 times more guys winking and emailing who don’t come close to matching my criteria. But it seems that weekly I get a few who meet enough criteria to respond to their inquiry.

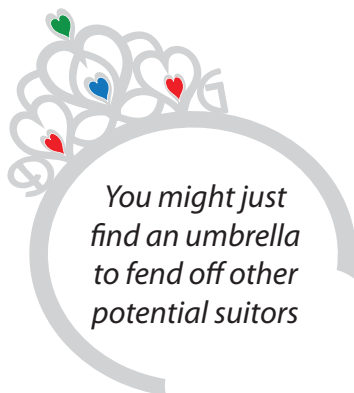
It is fun to meet new guys, although it can be time consuming, and if you let it, frustrating. Once I had 7 dates with 6 guys in 5 days. It is exhilarating to feel desirable, yet as I’ve become more experienced, I’ve become more discerning. Now I see two to four new guys a month, rather than a week.

The downside to this abundance, in addition to the time to correspond, talk on the phone and meet, is that there’s a sense that there is someone better just a mouse click away. If you are not desperate for a relationship, it is easy to reject every one, focusing on a fatal flaw. However, once in a while, when a guy seems to scratch a particular itch I’m feeling, I’ll hang out with him for a while, until one of us realizes we aren’t a good long-



term match and it isn't fair to the other to continue as if we were.

So while abundance is a positive thing, when you find someone you click with, try to stay present to his good qualities, rather than thinking “Who else is online?” When I can see that my current man has been online within 24 hours of our being together, I know he doesn't think we're long-term either, even if neither of us says it.



So when it's raining men, come into the shelter of one guy and dry off for a while and see how it feels. Who knows, you might just find an umbrella to fend off other potential suitors — at least for a while.

Fresh out of men?

When you find yourself out of prospective dates, wouldn't it be great if you could just go to the store and pick up what you want? Would that it was that easy. In "Shopping for men" I described how sometimes you have to be creative and patient in your search.

An Adventures in Delicious Dating After 40 reader writes,

"What happens when you run out of men? I've been on two online dating sites for the last 2.5 years and feel like I see the same guys over and over. I've tried volunteering, asking friends, talking to men in the wine store. I'm about ready to give up. I'm just not finding anyone who floats my boat. Any thoughts?"

I'm not really an expert on how to meet men, as nearly all my dates have come through online sites. But that doesn't stop me from having an opinion!

You're doing the right thing getting out there doing things you like and letting your friends know you're wanting to meet interesting men. You might expand even more by taking classes about things you want to

know. I took a class in auto mechanics years ago, not to meet men, but to learn about my car. But there were some cuties in the class.

Also go to stores men frequent. As I say that, I realize you could probably meet a lot of men at the cigar store, but who could stand the smell? So don't go to places you don't have an interest in.

However, I make a point of looking presentable (not all dated up, but still clean and neat) when I go to the hardware and electronics stores. I've even asked attractive men for their opinions in both. While this hasn't yielded a date, you get used to talking to strangers, and you make sure you are presentable even for a Fry's run for CD-ROMs.

Someone once suggested that I take up golf as the ratio of men to women was in my favor! I took a golf lesson once and wasn't entranced, so I've ignored that advice. But for some women it would be perfect if they liked the game. There is a steady stream of men teeing up all day long!

Now, let's revisit the virtual part of your quest. When I've had dry spells in between men, I've adjusted my online activities. First, go back through those familiar faces and give them a little more focus. Sometimes I've found something in a guy's profile that sounds interesting beyond my initial first read. Or maybe he's posted a new pic that is more appealing than the previous one. If so, I make contact.

Second, if the site lists "mutual matches" or "reverse

matches” (as Match.com does), go through those to see if anyone new jumps out. Maybe one or two criteria kept them out of your original search, but it isn’t really a deal breaker if he’s 5-foot-eleven instead of 6-feet tall.

And third, try being a bit more liberal in your search criteria. For example, if your searches have been limited to 25 miles from your house, when you expand that to 50, many more matches will appear. The same with age, income, height, etc.

There are many more than two dating sites, so try posting your profile to others. Most don’t require you to pay to post your profile, so you can see how much interest you get before you have to pony up and join.

Although I generally counsel women not to initiate the first contact, if you aren’t getting a lot of emails, then time to take some action. In “Dear Fido” I share how I wrote to a guy’s dog to make a fun first impression. And his dog wrote back!

A friend has had great success meeting interesting men through It’s Just Lunch. Other introduction services like Table for Six can also offer new faces. If there’s one near you and you aren’t put off by the initiation fee, it can yield some great guys.

So if you’re feeling you’re running out of good prospects, either take a break from searching for a while, or mix up your efforts. Remember, just like shopping for clothes, shopping for men should be fun!





Safe online dating

A gal pal said she was afraid to date online because of safety issues. It's true that online you don't know much about the guy. But that is true if you meet him in a store, bar, on a singles hike or dance. So there are some precautions you take no matter where you meet someone, but especially with online connections.

♥ **Set up an email address that doesn't include your name.** You can set up free email accounts through Yahoo!, Google, Hotmail and others. Make sure you don't put your name in the "from," just your handle. The reason you don't want to put your name in the "from" is someone can easily Google you and in some cases, find out where you live or work, go to church, or frequent other places if there is a posting with your name on a web site. I've found out where guys worked and lived, complete with a map to both, by a little Google sleuthing.

♥ **Only give your cell phone number.** Did you know that someone can find your home address and map if you give them a listed landline number? So if you give him your number, only give your cell. And to be even safer, take his number but don't give him yours.

♥ ***Tell a friend where you'll be.*** Email your pal all the information you have on your date, his name, phone, address, work. Tell her where you're meeting him and a check-in time. If you don't call her within 10 minutes of that time, she is to start calling you and him.

♥ ***Only meet him in public places for the first few dates.*** When I've made exceptions to this rule, I've been sorry. Not because of safety concerns, but because it is harder to extricate yourself from an uncomfortable situation or send him home if things get too heated. So now I only meet him in a public place for the first few dates.

♥ ***Don't get in the car with him on the first date.*** He may seem fine at first, but you are totally at his mercy when you are in his car. Always take your own car, no matter how nice he seems. If he pressures you or tries to make you feel silly for wanting to have your own car, you know it's time to leave. Same with him wanting you to drive him somewhere. Don't do it, no matter how trustworthy he seems. Ninety-nine percent of the time it will be fine, but you don't want to worry about that 1 percent that creates a problem.

♥ ***Ask about him at places he frequents.*** I learned a potential suitor worked at a company where another friend worked. After we set up a lunch date, I called my friend. She said she thought he was married. She checked around and found out