

# DATING



Before



During



After

# DATING

- What should you have thought about before a first date?
- How can you tell if someone likes you back?
- Do you really need a fish in your dating profile?

Dating isn't always easy. It can be messy, emotional, and scary – but it can also be exciting, fun, and amazing!

At RFSU (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education), we've created this guide to support and inspire you if you want to get better at dating. You'll get concrete tips, examples, and checklists for things that can be helpful to think about before, during, and after dates.

This guide is for you if you want to improve your dating experiences, regardless of sexual orientation or previous experience.



# BEFORE

## THE DATE



# WHO DO YOU WANT TO MEET?

Start by reflecting on who you're actually looking for and what you want from a relationship.

For example:

- Kind and considerate
- Communicates clearly and honestly
- Makes me laugh
- Shares some of my interests
- Wants to live together
- Respects my need for alone time
- Curious and adventurous



Thinking about what matters to you in a relationship makes it easier to communicate your needs – and to notice if something doesn't feel right, or if you're compromising too much.

## Did you know?



**Kindness, humor, and honesty ...** are the most important qualities in a partner according to young people in Sweden.

Source: Ungdomsbarometern 2025

# WHERE CAN YOU MEET SOMEONE?

You can meet people in all kinds of different places. Take a moment to think: what have you already tried – and what could you try next?

## Places you might already visit regularly

- School or work
- The gym or sports activities
- Youth centers, clubs, or societies
- Hobbies or leisure activities

## Places often seen as flirty

- Bars or clubs
- House parties
- Concerts or festivals
- Dating apps

### Heads up!

Dating apps can have different target groups, for example based on age or sexual orientation.

## Places for shared interests

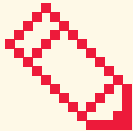
- Local events (e.g. conventions, markets, meetups)
- Societies or clubs linked to your interests
- Discord servers and online communities
- Multiplayer online games

## CREATING A GOOD DATING PROFILE



### Photos

- Use several different photos
- Include at least one clear photo of your face, taken from the front (not a mirror selfie)
- Show yourself doing something you enjoy



### Profile text

- **Who are you?** A short, simple description of yourself
- **What do you like?** Hobbies, interests, everyday things you enjoy
- **What are you looking for?** Friendship, something casual, or a relationship

### Fishes and flower crowns?

Ever wondered why so many Swedish people pose with a fish or wear a flower crown in their photos? Often, those are moments when people are okay with having their photo taken. You don't have to follow the trend. Ask someone to take photos of you at other times – you don't have to say they're for a dating profile if you don't want to.

## EXAMPLE OF A GOOD DATING PROFILE

**KIM**

Political science student, works part-time as a barista. Currently better at frothing milk than analyzing policy documents. Loves traveling – preferably to warm places with good beaches and colorful fishes 🐠🐡  
Bikes to school so I can eat Nutella sandwiches. Would be nice to have a hand to hold during scary movies.

21 y/o

Student

Lund

### Messages you could send Kim:

Political science sounds interesting – what made you choose it?

What's your dream travel destination (with or without 🐠)?

I'm guessing you like horror movies. Do you have a favorite?

## WRITING AN OPENING MESSAGE

How you start a conversation can make a big difference. Here's our guide – from best to worst.



Commenting on something they've written in their profile and asking a genuine question about it.



Asking about something in their photos (the activity, place, or pet – not their appearance).



Very generic messages like "Hey, what's up?"



Sexual, rude, or carelessly written messages. Only writing one word, like "hi".

## HOW TO ASK SOMEONE OUT

- Want to grab a coffee or a drink?
- Do you want to meet up and play X?
- Would you like to see the movie X on Thursday?
- It would be nice to meet in person – want to go for a walk sometime?
- I'm going to a party this weekend, want to come with me (as my date)?
- I really enjoy talking to you – would you like to go on a date?
- I'd like to get to know you better, want to meet on Friday?



If you don't get a straight answer: Respect it. Don't ask again and let them be the one to take initiative. You can say something like: "No worries – let me know if you'd like to meet another time."



Not getting a reply or being rejected doesn't mean there's something wrong with you. It's okay if it hurts – but dating is about finding someone who likes you for who you are!

## DATE IDEAS

- Escape room
- Mini golf
- Cinema or theater
- Museum or exhibition
- Going for a walk
- Picnic or cooking outdoors
- Board games
- Cooking or baking together
- Watching a movie
- Coffee, food, or drinks
- An organized activity
- Playing sports together

### Tips



Try skipping the alcohol. It can make talking easier, but also makes it harder to listen.

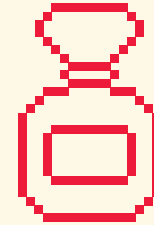


Doing an activity together gives you something to talk about.



Meet in a public place and tell a friend where you're going.

## BEFORE THE FIRST DATE – HYGIENE



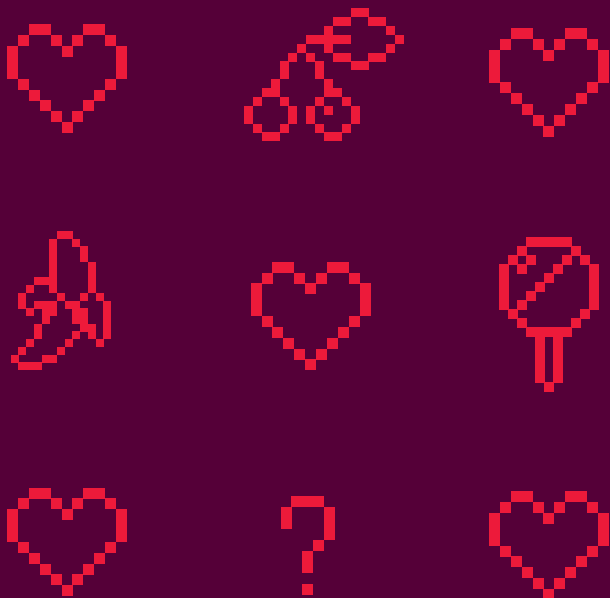
- Shower and wash your hair.
- Use deodorant (go easy on perfume – strong scents can bother people).
- Brush your teeth; bring gum or mints.
- Wear clean clothes you feel comfortable and confident in.
- If you think there might be a chance of sleeping together: bring condoms and make sure to tidy up at home before you leave.

### Tip

Anything that needs a shave or scrub? Taking a little extra time to take care of yourself can help you feel calmer and more confident.

# DURING

## THE DATE



## IF YOU FEEL NERVOUS

- Be kind to yourself.
- You can say you're nervous – your date probably feels the same.
- Mention any nervous habits or tics you have that show up when you're nervous, so you don't have to worry about it during the date.
- Prepare a few topics or questions beforehand, either in your head or on your phone.
- Decide roughly how long the date will be and what you will do together, this gives you an idea of what the day will look like.
- Take a short break if you need to, you can tell your date you need to use the restroom.

### Tips

- ◆ Saying you have plans afterward can help set boundaries. You can tell your date you're seeing some friends afterwards or have an early morning. This sets a clear end time – if the date goes well, you can always stay longer.
- ◆ If you know you won't want to have sex on the date, it can help to say so beforehand to avoid stressful expectations. You can write or say: "Just so you know, I usually don't have sex on the first date."

# WHAT TO TALK ABOUT

## Some guidelines

- Be interested rather than interesting. Focus on the person in front of you and ask questions instead of talking about yourself.
- Ask follow-up questions about what your date shares – it shows interest and that you want to get to know them better.
- Try to make sure both of you get equal space in the conversation.

### Heads up!

Some questions create connection and find shared interests, others help you learn more about the person. Questions can also identify deal-breakers, such as what someone finds important in a relationship.

### Tip

Asking about someone's interests often makes them happy – a great thing to aim for on a date (and in other situations) to create positive feelings.

### Tip

Feel free to give a compliment when you meet, for example about your date's nice sweater.

## Questions

### Common topics:

- Work or studies
- Travel
- Movies, TV shows, or books
- Family and background
- Free time and interests

### General questions:

- What do you do in your free time?
- What's your dream travel destination?
- What's your favorite movie?
- What makes you happy?
- What do you think about X?
- Have you been to X (convention, festival, event)?

### Personal questions:

- What is your family like? Are you close?
- Who knows you best, and why?
- What do you think is important in a relationship?

These tips also work when you meet someone new outside of dating.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE IS INTERESTED?

There are two basic rules to understand whether your date is interested. They also help you avoid being “too forward” or ending up in the friend zone.

1

### Mirroring

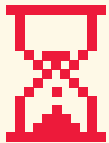
If you look at your date and smile and they smile back, you’re mirroring each other. If they look away instead, they’re not mirroring you. This could mean they’re not interested – or simply that they’re nervous.



2

### Wait for a response

If you place your hand on your date’s arm, wait to see how they respond before taking another step. If they don’t try to get closer – remove your hand.



Heads up!

This also applies when you’re texting. Since you can’t see facial expressions or body language, it’s even more important to pause and wait for their response.

DURING THE DATE

13

# AFTER

THE DATE



# ROMANTIC GESTURES



Romantic gestures are a way to show that you care about someone – whether you’ve just met or are already in a relationship. Here are tips for how you can show affection, both in person and while in a long-distance relationship:

- Give or send flowers or gifts.
- Leave or send letters or cute notes.
- Buy their favorite snack.
- Plan a dinner, picnic, swim, walk, bike ride, or home spa.
- Invite them to an activity.
- Send funny, cute photos/videos/memes.
- Play games together (board games or online).
- Save up for a trip together and plan it.
- Write sweet or sexy messages.

## Tip

Romance doesn’t have to be expensive – adapt it to your finances. Instead of an expensive spa, you can create a home spa with bubble bath and candles.

# WHEN DATING BECOMES A RELATIONSHIP

How do you know you’re officially together? The easiest way to be sure is to talk about it and ask, since it’s different for everyone how quickly a relationship becomes official.

## Signs that a date is turning into a relationship:

- You feel safe with each other and can be yourselves.
- You talk and see each other often in everyday life.
- You show affection in public, e.g. holding hands or kissing.
- You’ve met each other’s friends or family.
- You spend time together outside of dates.
- You’re there for each other on tough days.

## Tip

Listen to your feelings. Check in with what feels right for you and how you’re doing in the relationship. Feeling happy, safe, and able to be yourself is a strong foundation for a healthy relationship.

# IF IT ENDS

Sometimes things don't turn out as expected – maybe you didn't get the second date you hoped for, or the relationship ended. Here are some tips to help you through it if things feel heavy.

## Create distance

It can help to not be constantly reminded of each other – unfollow the person on social media and avoid seeing them for a while.

### Tip

Feel like reaching out anyway? Write to a friend or go for a walk. Let the feeling out without contacting the person.

## Talk to friends and family

Be honest that it's hard – your friends want to be there for you. Something as simple as sharing a meal, watching a movie, or playing games can make a big difference.

## Stay active

Even if you don't feel like it, keep doing things that previously brought you joy. If all you want is to stay on the couch – try doing the opposite.

## Eat, sleep, move

Don't skip basic needs when you're feeling down.



**Trouble eating?** Go for ready-made food or eat with someone.



**Trouble sleeping?** Create good routines, move your body during the day, and wind down without screens before bed.

## Give it time

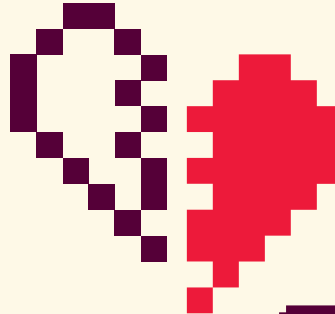
It doesn't feel like it now, but the painful feelings will fade. You're used to thinking of the person when something fun happens or when you're sad and need to talk. Creating new habits takes time – but it's possible.

## Dare to be alone

Focusing on yourself for a while creates better conditions for future dating. Quick validation won't help you in the long run.

## Dare to date again

Bad dates or relationships that end can also be valuable experiences. Trust yourself and try again!



## IF YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS

Now you've received some tips on how to step up your dating game. Need more advice or have questions about relationships, the body, sex, or mental health? There is plenty of support available in Sweden, for example:

- Student health services at your school
- Your local healthcare center (1177.se)
- RFSU.se
- RFSU:s clinic (digital or in Stockholm)
- YOUUMO.se/en/
- Youth clinics (up to ages 22-26)
- Killar.se/en (up to age 25)
- Support centers and helplines such as tjej- och transjourer
- RFSL's counseling services

### Remember

You have the right to be happy and healthy. If you aren't, it's important to seek help – whether your struggles are about dating or something else entirely.

## ABOUT RFSU AND THE PROJECT

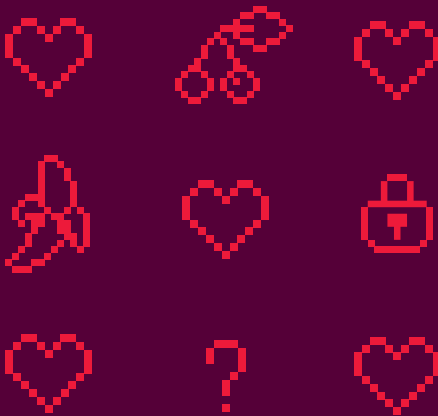
RFSU (the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education) is a non-profit membership organization founded in 1933. This means anyone can join and influence RFSU.

Through knowledge, engagement, and advocacy, RFSU aims to contribute to a world where everyone is free to enjoy and make decisions about their bodies and sexuality.

Since 2023, RFSU has been working to counter poor mental health and involuntary loneliness among boys and men. This guide was created thanks to funding from the Public Health Agency of Sweden.



Want to know more?



## YOUR GUIDE TO DATING

Dating isn't always easy. It can be messy, emotional, and scary – but it can also be exciting, fun, and amazing! This guide is here to support you, whether you're new to dating or have some experience already. You'll find practical tips and reflections to help you feel more confident and at ease before, during, and after dates.