



First dates can be a minefield, especially if you've never met the person before. There are so many unwritten rules - from how long to stay to when to send a text if you like them without looking "too keen". With so many people connecting on dating apps like Tinder and Bumble these days, how can you tell if there's any real chemistry?

Relationships expert Jo Hemmings says: "Whether you are a dating veteran or a newbie singleton, first dates are always nerve-wracking. Here are some tips how to ease your way." Here she shares her tips to help your next first date go without a hitch - and the red flags to watch out for.

90-minute rule

Plan to keep your first date to an hour or an hour and a half maximum. This way you can avoid all the anxiety about whether you like each other or not or where it might be going by telling them before the date that you have somewhere else to be later on. If you find the date goes better than expected, either 'fess up to your plan or have a mysterious cancellation come up.

Choose a Tuesday

Sunday evenings are peak app dating time. Meet your match then online, chat on Monday and meet on a Tuesday. No need to hover around and wait for the weekend, Tuesday (or at a push, Wednesday) is the perfect mid-week first date time. If you really like each other, it paves the

way for a follow-up date at the weekend.

First impressions DO count

You may try and revise your first impression of your first date, because you want to fancy them or you don't want to upset them. Or maybe because you want to give them a chance, which is all good. But notice and remember your first reaction to them as you saw them in that initial moment. It can be quite telling. Your heart may not skip a beat, but those few seconds often matter more than we might care to think. And an initial feeling of "no way" is unlikely to reverse itself, however hard you try.

You're not on The Apprentice

Don't fire questions at your date - relax and let conversation flow. I know a first date is a bit like an interview, assessing whether you will suit each other or not. But try not to fire off a load of questions at your date. It will make both of you feel more awkward.

Avoid salad

Sure, you eat a healthy diet - and even if you don't and you live on Mc Donald's, you want them to think you do, right? But pretty much anything small and green – from spinach to parsley or watercress - has a nagging habit of getting stuck just in that place on your teeth where your smile is at its broadest.

Actions speak louder

Signalling whether you like someone on a first date – or don't – can be stressful to put in words. A simple tip is to lean in towards them if you like them, and back from them if you don't. It's subtle enough to deliver the message, and easily picked up on by your date.

The WOW rule

Make sure you don't get too tipsy - drink water in between boozy drinks. That's Wine - One Water (WOW). It's really easy for a first date to get messy because you've been too anxious to eat or because a few drinks gives you a bit of Dutch courage. To keep a clear(ish) head, have a glass of water between each alcoholic drink. *You'll thank me in the morning.*

Keep an open mind

You shouldn't be expected to launch into details of how your wedding day will look or how many children you want when on a first date. But if you're looking for something casual or more serious, be honest about what you want. Respect your date's views and candour even if that is not what you were hoping for. Listen to your instincts though. Your date may start sounding off about their ex or something politically uncomfortable, or just behave in a way that you know doesn't feel right. If your gut tells you something is seriously off, then make your excuses and just leave.

When to text

Firstly, there is nothing more uncomfortable than seeing a couple out on their first date, nervously glancing at their phone to check on pings and notifications. Your phone may well be a modern day security blanket, but alerts can wait. Put it away. If you liked your date and are keen to see them again, go in for a thank you text when you get home. It shows enthusiasm without being over keen. (The U.S.Sun)

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