



GUIDE TO
50+ DATING



THE DEBRETT'S AND OURTIME
GUIDE TO

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When it comes to finding someone special with whom to share our lives, chance encounters are sadly rare, and increasing numbers of us are choosing to take control of our romantic destiny. It's no wonder then that almost a million over-50s are looking to dating sites to find companionship.

Online dating is now the norm, and with its popularity comes a host of new etiquette dilemmas. Who should make the first move? Where to go on a first date? And who picks up the bill? You may not be lacking in life experience, but dating in 2018 is another matter.

As the arbiters of good manners for the past two centuries, Debrett's knows a thing or two about etiquette in changing times. They've teamed up with Ourtime, the dating site for young people over 50, to provide a helpful guide to steer you through the beginning of your online dating journey.

This guide is for anyone looking to master the art of dating, but who has no idea where to start. It features words of wisdom and advice from Debrett's, as well as further tips and encouragement from Ourtime's dating expert, Kate Taylor.



Ourtime dating expert Kate Taylor

POLISH YOUR PROFILE



GET PICTURE PERFECT

Use recent photographs, no more than a year old, when creating your profile. There's no point trying to mislead your date if you ever hope to meet in person.

Include one full-length body shot and a closer portrait. Ask a friend to take the pictures and encourage you to smile, so you look friendly and approachable. Pictures that show off your passions give an instant idea of your interests too.

Make sure you're the only person in your photographs – an innocent friend or family member could easily be misinterpreted as a former flame. A beloved pet is a different matter – almost 25% of over 50s think it improves a profile picture, and it's also a useful way of filtering out those who are allergic to cats or hate dogs.



BE HONEST

Much like a CV, your profile should be honest and not too self-promoting – but not overly self-deprecating either. Excessive modesty can come across as negativity or cynicism.

Don't resort to clichés about enjoying walks in the park, dinner and reading. Be specific: it's easier to start a conversation if you say that you love Korean food or Ingmar Bergman films.

Ourtime dating expert Kate Taylor says:

“Write your profile like you’re introducing yourself to someone at a party. You don’t need to divulge health issues, problems or your innermost thoughts – keep things upbeat.”

When you're presented with potential matches, try to remain open-minded. Don't dismiss somebody because you can't stand their outfit. Superficialities fade into irrelevance if you establish a spark, so if a profile makes you smile despite that terrible jumper, swap messages and see if you hit it off.

Kate says:

“It's fine to have some non-negotiable criteria – for example, you might only chat to non-smokers or those living within 10 miles of you. But outside those deal-breakers, talk to as many people as you can. Love can blossom where you least expect it!”



KEEP AN OPEN MIND

COMMUNICATE WITH CONFIDENCE



MAKE YOUR MOVE

It may have been traditional in the past for men to make the first move, but **online dating is an egalitarian plane**, and women can now take the initiative too.

Keep your first message light-hearted and brief, and make it personal: mentioning something you particularly like about a person's profile will show that you're singling them out. Don't be creepy, though: it's far too early for come-ons or innuendo.

Kate says:

“You might not receive an immediate reply, but don't be discouraged – people get busy! When I was online dating, I got a new job and was too busy to check my mailbox for three weeks. When I eventually did, I found a lovely message from a gorgeous man – and he's now my husband.”



BE CAUTIOUS WITH COMPLIMENTS... and flirty emojis

It's natural to want to show your personality in your messages, but **avoid over-using exclamation marks, emojis and kisses**, which can come across as excitable.

Write your messages as you would naturally speak. It's best to avoid too much irony and dry humour, which can seem cynical online. Save your sarcasm for when you meet in person and your date can see your smile.

It's important to feel confident before exchanging contact information or meeting in person, so take some time to get to know somebody's hobbies, job and family situation.

On the other hand, don't string out the messaging for too long: **once you've surpassed the five-message mark, it makes sense to take the initiative and propose a date.** Don't be vague – just saying “we should have a drink sometime” won't get you anywhere.

Kate says:

“If you're struggling with moving from message to date, check out Ourtime's group activities for inspiration, with events such as wine tasting and cooking lessons.”



TAKE IT SLOWLY

PLAN A MEMORABLE MEETING



DIFFERENTIATE YOUR DATE

Tailor the date around your shared interests. A walk in the park or visit to an exhibition that you're both keen to see are relaxed ways to get to know each other while indulging in a shared interest.

Avoid anywhere too extravagant or expensive: while you might have more disposable income now, paying triple figures for front row opera seats or a bottle of vintage champagne might make your date feel uncomfortable.

A first date is a great chance to check that you like each other as much in person as you did online, so keep it short and sweet. If you click, you can always extend the date into dinner, or make plans for a longer second date.

Kate says:

“Go into the first date with low expectations: it’s the best way to combat nerves and ensure a relaxed atmosphere. Just look forward to meeting an interesting new person. That way, you’ll be guaranteed to have a good time (and finding love will be an added bonus).”



BRIEF ENCOUNTERS



GO IT ALONE

However nervous you might be feeling, don't be tempted to bring a friend to chaperone (even from a distance). You'll only make things awkward for your date. If you are concerned about safety, schedule in a call or text with a friend instead.

Awkward silences are often the most dreaded part of a first date, but **asking plenty of questions can help prevent the conversation running dry.**

Traditionally "taboo" topics such as religion and politics are rarely off the menu nowadays, but be sensitive to your date's opinions and background before launching into a tirade about Brexit.

Be open about your personal situation, including any children you have, but don't fall into the trap of bad-mouthing your ex or bemoaning previous dating disasters. And while you might be proud of your new grandchild, resist the temptation to take your date through hundreds of photographs.



TALK THE TALK

In today's dating world, whoever issued the invitation should expect to pick up the bill, but if you're meeting for drinks you might prefer to alternate rounds.

If your date insists on paying, accept graciously and promise to reciprocate next time (even if you suspect there won't be one).



BRAVE THE BILL



RIP UP THE RULEBOOK

Confused by conflicting advice about physical intimacy on a first date? Forget everything you were told 30 years ago. **Modern romance often involves a briefer 'courting' period,** so don't feel you're jeopardising future prospects if your instincts are telling you to throw caution to the wind – whether it's a hug, a kiss or an overnight stay.

Kate says:

"Ourtime research has shown that over-50s daters become physically intimate much quicker than those in their 20s and 30s, but feel free to take things slowly and let the excitement build."

FINE-TUNE THE FOLLOW-UP



KEEP 'EM KEEN

More than half of 50+ daters wouldn't message their date the next day, even if they're interested, but modern dating etiquette says that if a first date goes well, a strategic delay isn't necessary before following up. A friendly text message or email within 24 hours will reassure the other person that you'd like to keep the conversation going.

Don't overdo the contact during the early stages, however: You might have become accustomed to regular updates from your former spouse or partner, but aimless texts asking what that person had for lunch can come across as needy in the first few weeks of romance.

Kate says:

"Texts are a lovely, low-key way of getting in touch, but don't underestimate the power of a telephone call if you've swapped numbers. Voices actually stimulate our brains to create a feeling of attraction."



TRY, TRY AGAIN

A resounding lack of follow-up from your date might seem rude, but **many online daters assume that if there was a clear lack of chemistry between you, there's no need for further communication.**

If the other person is keen and you're not, it's best to be honest from the outset and say how much you enjoyed meeting them, but that you would prefer to remain friends.

Kate says:

"Never give up, and keep a positive attitude. There are almost a million singles over 50 in the UK who are online dating, so just get back online and set up a date with someone new."

GO FORTH TO THE FUTURE



MAKE IT EXCLUSIVE

After three or more dates, you will usually have a sense of whether or not you would like to make it exclusive. If that's the case, don't be afraid to initiate the conversation. The other person is unlikely to be scared off if they're feeling the same way.

While it's important to be open with your date about children and ex-spouses, **take your time before you introduce family members to a new partner.**

Exact timing will depend on the ages of any children you have, but **it's wise to wait until you have agreed to make things exclusive before involving others.**

Kate says:

“Don't feel embarrassed that you met your new partner online. Online dating is now the UK's third most popular way for couples to meet. Soon, your single buddies will be asking you to help them create their Ourtime profile.”



CONSIDER FAMILY AND FRIENDS



KEEP THE SPARK ALIVE

Moving on to a relationship is where the fun starts! In tougher times of lovers' quarrels, remember what made you choose your significant other and try to retain some of the magic of your early dates.

Ready to put the Debrett's and Ourtime guide into practice?
Start your dating journey today at

www.ourtime.co.uk

Good luck, and have fun!



The dating site for young people over 50

Start your dating journey today at
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