

Dating Safety Tips

Meeting new people is exciting, but you should always be cautious when interacting with someone you don't know. Use your best judgment and put your safety first, whether you are exchanging initial messages or meeting in person. While you can't control the actions of others, there are things you can do to help you stay safe during your Match experience.

Online Safety

- **Never Send Money or Share Financial Information**

Never send money, especially over wire transfer, even if the person claims to be in an emergency. Wiring money is like sending cash — it's nearly impossible to reverse the transaction or trace where the money went. Never share information that could be used to access your financial accounts. If another user asks you for money, report it to us immediately.

For tips on avoiding romance scams, check out some advice from the U.S Federal Trade Commission on the FTC website.

- **Protect Your Personal Information**

Never share personal information, such as your social security number, home or work address, or details about your daily routine (e.g., that you go to a certain gym every Monday) with people you don't know. If you are a parent, limit the information that you share about your children on your profile and in early communications. Avoid sharing details such as your children's names, where they go to school, or their ages or genders.

- **Stay on the Platform**

Keep conversations on the DogOwnersDate.com platform while you're getting to know someone. Users with bad intentions often try to move the conversation to text, messaging apps, email, or phone right away.

- **Be Wary of Long Distance and Overseas Relationships**

Watch out for scammers who claim to be from your country but stuck somewhere else, especially if they ask for financial help to return home. Be wary of anyone who will not meet in person or talk on a phone/video call—they may not be who they say they are. If someone is avoiding your questions or pushing for a serious relationship without meeting or getting to know you first — that's a red flag.+

- **Report All Suspicious and Offensive Behavior**

You know when someone's crossed the line and when they do, we want to know about it. Block and report anyone that violates our terms. Here are some examples of violations:

- Requests for money or donations
- Underage users
- Harassment, threats, and offensive messages

- Inappropriate or harmful behavior during or after meeting in person
- Fraudulent profiles
- Spam or solicitation including links to commercial websites or attempts to sell products or services

You can report any concerns about suspicious behavior from any profile page or messaging window at Contact Us.

- **Protect Your Account**

Be sure to pick a strong password, and always be careful when logging into your account from a public or shared computer. DOD will never send you an email asking for your username and password information — if you receive an email asking for account information, report it immediately.

Meeting in Person

- **Don't Be In A Rush**

Take your time and get to know the other person before agreeing to meet or chat off DOD. Don't be afraid to ask questions to screen for any red flags or personal deal-breakers. A phone or video call can be a useful screening tool before meeting.

- **Meet in Public and Stay in Public**

Meet for the first few times in a populated, public place (Dog Park) — never at your home, your date's home, or any other private location. If your date pressures you to go to a private location, end the date and communications immediately.

- **Tell Friends and Family About Your Plans**

Tell a friend or family member of your plans, including when and where you're going. Have your cell phone charged and with you at all times. Turn on GPS so your friends or family know where to find you.

- **Be in Control of Your Transportation**

We want you to be in control of how you get to and from your date so that you can leave whenever you want. If you're driving yourself, it's a good idea to have a backup plan such as a ride-share app or a friend to pick you up.

- **Know Your Limits**

Be aware of the effects of drugs or alcohol on you specifically — they can impair your judgment and your alertness. If your date tries to pressure you to use drugs or drink more than you're comfortable with, hold your ground and end the date.

- **Don't Leave Drinks or Personal Items Unattended**

Know where your drink comes from and know where it is at all times — only accept drinks poured or served directly from the bartender or server. Many substances that are slipped into drinks to facilitate sexual assault are odorless, colorless, and tasteless. Also, keep your phone, purse, wallet, and anything containing personal information on you at all times.

- **If You Feel Uncomfortable, Leave**

It's okay to end the date early if you're feeling uncomfortable. In fact, it's encouraged. And if your instincts are telling you something is off or you feel unsafe, ask the bartender or server for help.

- **LGBTQ+ Travel**

Be careful while traveling. We recognize and believe in the importance of being inclusive of all gender identities and sexual orientations, but the reality is this: nowhere in the world is without potential risk, and some countries have specific laws that target LGBTQ+ people. Check out the laws around you when you travel to a new place and research what types of legal protection, if any, are available to you based on sexual orientation. In the event that you're in unsafe territory, we suggest that you do not log into your DOD account while you are there. If you choose to log in, you should place your profile in Hidden or Private Mode.

It's important to exercise extra caution if you choose to connect with new people in these countries - as some law enforcement have been known to use dating apps as tools for potential entrapment. Some countries have also recently introduced laws that criminalize communications between individuals on same-sex dating applications or websites and even aggravate penalties if that communication leads to sexual encounters. Visit [ILGA World](#) to see the latest sexual orientation laws by country, and consider donating to support their research. Source: visiILGA World, Updated March 2019

Sexual Health & Consent

- **Protect Yourself**

When used correctly and consistently, condoms can significantly reduce the risk of contracting and passing on STI's like HIV. But, be aware of STIs like herpes or HPV that can be passed on through skin-to-skin contact.

- **Know Your Status**

Not all STIs show symptoms, and you don't want to be in the dark about your status. Stay on top of your health and prevent the spread of STIs by getting tested regularly. Here's where you can [find a clinic near you](#) (US only).

- **Talk About It**

Communication is everything: Before you get physically intimate with a partner, talk about sexual health and STI testing. And be aware — in some places, it's actually a crime to knowingly pass on an STI. Need help starting the conversation? Here are some tips:

- **Consent**

All sexual activity must start with consent and should include ongoing check-ins with your partner. Verbal communication can help you and your partner ensure that you respect each other's boundaries. Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and sex is never owed to anyone. Do not proceed if your partner seems uncomfortable or unsure, or if your partner is unable to consent due to the effects of drugs or alcohol.

Resources for Help, Support, or Advice

Remember — even if you follow these tips, no method of risk reduction is perfect. If you have a negative experience, please know that it is not your fault and help is available. Report any incidents and consider reaching out to one of the resources below. **If you feel you are in immediate danger or need emergency assistance, call 911 (U.S. or Canada) or your local law enforcement agency.**

RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-HOPE (4673) | online.rainn.org | www.rainn.org

Planned Parenthood

1-800-230-7526 | www.plannedparenthood.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 | www.thehotline.org

National Human Trafficking Hotline

1-888-373-7888 or text 233733 | www.humantraffickinghotline.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

1-877-739-3895 | www.nsvrc.org

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

1-800-THE-LOST (843-5678) | www.cybertipline.com

Cyber Civil Rights Initiative

1-844-878-2274 | www.cybercivilrights.org

VictimConnect - Crime Victim Resource Center

1-855-4VICTIM (855-484-2846) | www.victimconnect.org

FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center

www.ic3.gov

LGBT National Help Center

1-888-843-4564 | www.glbtnationalhelpcenter.org

Trans Lifeline

1-877-565-8860 (US) or 1-877-330-6366 (CA) | www.translifeline.org