

# To Meet the Love of Your Life All You Need Is a Computer

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Once derided as a desperate option, Internet dating sites have entered the mainstream. At least 50 million people are surfing for love on-line. More than 20% of the visitors to dating sites are age 50 or older.

Posting an on-line profile at a major dating Web site can get you noticed by thousands of potential matches, more people than you would meet in a year of parties. It requires no more computer savvy than knowing how to send E-mail.

## FIRST STEPS

Visit popular dating sites. Most allow nonmembers to browse listings for free. At each one, do a quick search for potential dates based on a few criteria, such as age and location, and see how many members pop up. If it's fewer than 100, think twice about subscribing. Also, see how the site "feels" to you. Does it seem too flash, too young, too old?

Once you've decided on the sites you like, post a profile on two of them – a major site with millions of members and a specialty site geared to your age group, religion, or ethnic group.

## TOP DATING SITES

### Americansingles.com

Provides 24-hour customer service through a toll-free number – a rarity among Internet firms. It offers help creating a profile, posting photos, etc. 10 million members. \$24.95/month.\*

### Date.com

Stays in contact with member by E-mail and an E-newsletter full of

advice and stories. Two million members. \$24.95/month.

### Match.com

Has absorbed AOL's dating service, [Love@AOL.com](http://Love@AOL.com) which is popular with people over age 50. This makes Match.com a promising choice for older daters. Eight million members. \$24.95/month.

### Yahoo! Personals

([www.personals.yahoo.com](http://www.personals.yahoo.com))

Is another sophisticated, easy-to-navigate site. Yahoo! doesn't release membership totals, but it is probably one of the largest services. \$19.95/month

## SPECIALTY SITES

### ThirdAgeConnections.com

Is a fun, easy-to-use dating site aimed at people in their 40s, 50s, and 60s who are dating again or looking for partners to share activities. 1.5 million members. \$20/month.

### Senior FriendFinder.com

May be the largest senior match site. Though mainly a dating site, some members join to find friends with whom to travel or share hobbies. 750,000 members. \$21.99/three months.

### Christiandates.com

Combined the oldest off-line Christian dating service with the largest on-line one. \$29/month.

### Jdate.com

Is a Jewish singles site with more than 500,000 members. \$28.50/month.

## GETTING NOTICED

Here's how to put your best foot forward when you post a listing...

**Start with an intriguing headline** one that portrays an appealing image of you as a partner.

*Examples:* "Long arms to embrace you"... "Whispering lightly in your ear"... "Laughing through life. Ready for a chuckle?"... "I'm a detective, pique my curiosity."

**Reveal your personality.** Don't write a personal ad – "Single white male, 45, seeks..." You'll attract more interest if your profile has personality. Don't just *say* your witty, *be* witty.

*Examples:* "People tell me I make them laugh. I'm pleased to add that most of the time when they say this, I've been trying to make them laugh."

**Avoid over or underselling yourself.** You'll turn off potential partners if you come off as a braggart. Go too far the other way, and readers will find you unappealing. Aim for upbeat but honest. Ask a friend or family member if your profile accurately reflects you. (continued)

*Bottom Line/Personal* interviewed

Stephany A. Crowley, Quebec-based founder of e-datingexperts.com, a free Web site offering advice about on-line dating. She is author of the forthcoming *e-dating Secrets: How to Search for Your Perfect Love Match on the Internet* (available from the author).



**Be specific about what you want.** Your goal is to get readers to blurt out, "I want that, too!"

*Example:* "I'm looking for someone I can travel a lifetime with and then curl up with in front of a roaring fire."

**Never say what you *don't* want in a partner.** You will seem negative. Instead, express your desires positively.

*Example:* Replace "I don't want a clingy partner" with "I want a relationship in which we can each explore our own interests."

**Include a trivia question.** People find it hard to resist responding to a question when they know the answer.

*Example:* If you're a movie fan, end your profile with a line from a favorite film, followed by "extra points if you can identify this quote."

**Update your profile every few days.** On most sites, new or newly updated profiles appear at the top of

the list when members search for potential matches.

**Post a mini-photo album.** You can get 10 times more responses if you include pictures of yourself. Have photos taken of you in your favorite places, doing things that reflect what's important to you. If you don't have a digital camera, use a regular camera and have a photo shop put the pictures on a CD-ROM in "jpg" format. Some sites even let you mail in photos, which they'll scan and put on-line for you. Make sure the photos are recent. If they no longer look like you, your match may be disappointed when you first meet.

#### INTERNET ETIQUETTE

**Don't expect too much too soon.**

Most E-daters exchange several long get-to-know-you E-mails before meeting. The first date should be short – coffee or a drink in a public place.

**Compliment and be curious.**

In your first E-mail about details from a potential partner's profile. It shows that you are attracted to more than the photo and helps draw out the prospective match. Convincing the person that you will like him/her is even more important than convincing him that you're what he is after. More than anything else, dates want to be wanted.

**Expect to be asked very personal questions.**

It's common in second and third E-mails to ask probing questions about each other's backgrounds, careers and families.

**Do some checking.**

Most on-line daters are honest about themselves, but it doesn't hurt to check.

*Example:* If a prospective match mentions a place of employment, call the company to see if he works there.

\*Most sites offer a discount for multiple-month subscriptions.