



Fun Dates

{THAT DON'T BREAK THE BANK}

Youth share their ideas for awesome, inexpensive dates.

Ah, the movie theater. A place where for the meager price of a small country you can sit in a dark room, eat a bag of over-buttered popcorn, and learn nothing at all about the people you're spending time with.

In all fairness, movie theaters

certainly have their place. Watching a movie on the big screen can be exciting. Yet it's also expensive! And even if you do find a discount theater, when it comes to deepening friendships, the typical movie theater date doesn't let you discover much more about the people sitting next to you than whether or not they scream during a scary scene.

In *For the Strength of Youth*, you're counseled to "plan dating activities that are safe, positive, and inexpensive and that will help you get to know each other" ([2011], 4).

The next time you plan a date, you might consider putting a little creativity behind your thinking. Simple but creative dates tend to be both memorable and enjoyable.

Why Date?

For starters, why do we bother dating in the first place? Why go through the effort? Well, dating has a lot to offer. As explained in *For the Strength of Youth*, “In cultures where dating is acceptable, it can help you learn and practice social skills, develop friendships, have wholesome fun, and eventually find an eternal companion” (4).

Remember that pairing off for an activity—dating—is reserved for those 16 and older. Also, as explained in *For the Strength of Youth*, “When you begin dating, go with one or more additional couples. Avoid going on frequent dates with the same person” (4).

Ideas for creative, inexpensive dates exist everywhere. Here are a few experiences that youth shared with us.

Board Games with a Twist

Playing board games is a simple date that lets everyone interact and usually results in laughter and good times aplenty. But have you ever considered *acting out* a board game?

McKenna B., 17, from Nevada, USA, put together a murder-mystery dinner date with her friends that was based on the board game Clue®. “It was one of my favorite dates,” McKenna says. “The whole dinner, we were trying to guess who was the murderer.”

They held the dinner at a friend’s house, complete with costumes (from items found at home) and gag props based on the game (which can be made of paper for an inexpensive

option). Yes, that means Colonel Mustard was in the house for real. “It was great,” McKenna says. It was also affordable. “Dates don’t have to be expensive,” she adds. Hers wasn’t, and everybody still enjoyed the evening.

Food, Glorious Food

Dates and dining often go hand in hand. But you can shell out big bucks at a restaurant. Here are a couple of alternatives when it comes to meals and dates.

“I went on a date once where we went grocery shopping,” explains Haley M., 16, from California, USA. “We bought ingredients and went home and cooked a meal. That was really fun. I got to know the people.

We were doing stuff together.”

Matthew P., 18, from Utah, USA, recalls a formal dance when he and the other guys didn’t have a lot of money to spend on fancy restaurants, but they still wanted to give their dates a three-course meal for dinner.

Their solution was to have the first course, French fries, at a local fast-food place. Course two? Chicken nuggets at a different fast-food location. And the third course? Milkshakes at a third location. “Nobody had to spend a bunch of money,” Matthew says. “The way we did it, everybody enjoyed the dinner.”

Another popular option to consider is to have the dinner “catered” by parents or siblings.





Simple Solutions

Creative dates don't have to be complicated or elaborate in order to be awesome.

Katherine J., 18, from California, USA, lives near the ocean. She and her friends regularly plan bonfires at the beach as creative dates. "We'll cook s'mores and hot dogs. And from there, we'll play games around the fire," says Katherine.

A hot-dog roast doesn't require much in the way of planning. And who doesn't like hanging out around a bonfire? "We always invite a whole bunch of people," Katherine says.

As another example, here's a creative evening that requires no more preparation than imagination and a couple of digital cameras. Katie J., 17, from North Carolina, USA, loves going on photo scavenger hunts with her friends. "We'll pick the most random pictures for the list," Katie says. "We assign point values for the pictures. A picture with the

mayor was worth 150 points!" For more details on this type of activity, see lds.org/go/photoNE2.

Simple, creative dates can be invented in a manner of minutes and can cost nearly nothing. How about feeding ducks at a pond? You're only out a few slices of bread. Or what about holding a snowcastle or sandcastle sculpting contest, using pots and buckets from around the house to help build? A little creativity goes a long way.

'Tis the Season

As one more area to consider for date ideas, remember that holidays offer all kinds of possibilities. You might try a chocolate potluck party for Valentine's Day or cooking a dinner where all the food is dyed green for St. Patrick's Day.

Daniel J., 17, from Utah, USA, once went on a group date during October that involved jack-o'-lanterns. "We carved a bunch of pumpkins and then took them around with bags of candy," he says. At each home they visited, they left a pumpkin and a bag of candy on someone's porch in

hopes of making that person smile. Then they rang the doorbell and ran. "It was really fun," Daniel says.

Brooke H., 17, from Utah, USA, remembers fondly an ugly sweater Christmas party she once attended. The idea for this party was to wear with pride the ugliest Christmas sweater you could possibly track down. "We loved it," Brooke says.

Why not throw your own ugly sweater Christmas party? You could even make treats together at the party and then deliver them to neighbors while caroling in your terrifically horrific sweaters.

Fun Awaits

Ultimately, you don't need to hire a marching band for background entertainment when you plan a date. Nor do you need to do so when asking someone on a date in the first place.

An enjoyable, creative date might be nothing more than a game of kickball or Frisbee at the park. The possibilities are endless. If you're still looking for a jump-start on ideas, visit lds.org/go/dateideasNE2 for a list of cool activities.

Once you try a few dates like these, you might be surprised how long it will be before you decide again to sit in a large, dark room with an overpriced bag of popcorn. **NE**

