

The DO'S and DON'TS of DATING

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WHETHER YOU'RE A DATING ALL-STAR or still sitting on the bench, there are a lot of things you can learn about having a fun time or avoiding fundamental errors. Don't be ashamed if you're not naturally gifted when it comes to dating. You can always turn it around. Here are a few of the *do's* and *don'ts* of dating.

Will your dating decisions get a smiley face or a face-palm?

BEFORE THE DATE

- **DON'T:** Decide that even though you're not 16 yet, you're totally mature for your age and can totally handle dating.
DO: Follow the guidelines from prophets and apostles in *For the Strength of Youth*.
- **DON'T:** Assume nobody wants to date you, or wait idly for dates to come along, and complain when they don't.
DO: Always try to develop friendships and meet people. Even if it doesn't lead to dates, it teaches good lessons and adds richness to life.
- **DON'T:** Look only to popular social media influencers, blogs, or vlogs for tips on how to behave during dates.
DO: Get advice from righteous parents, worthy older siblings, or trusted Church leaders about dating. They care about you, their experience is more relevant, and their advice is better.
- **DON'T:** Always ask someone out in a complicated, elaborate way.
DO: Just ask. The direct approach is usually best.

PLANNING

- **DON'T:** Pick up your date and say, "So . . . what do you want to do?"
DO: Have a plan—and a backup plan.¹
- **DON'T:** Decide to do something outdoorsy or athletic, but don't tell your date, who opts to dress nicely.
DO: Communicate ahead of time. Don't keep your date guessing, and don't be shy about asking. And parents need to know what's going on too.
- **DON'T:** Plan activities that may require you to take out a loan to finance them.
DO: Be creative and find ways to interact that aren't expensive.²
- **DON'T:** Plan a date that lasts most of a day.
DO: Plan a date that's relatively limited in scope and time. Fun dates don't need to be epic in terms of either length or effort.



ATTITUDE

- **DON'T:** Assume that the date means something hugely significant or implies a great commitment.
DO: Relax. Your only commitment is to spend time with someone for an activity in which you'll get to know one another and the others in the group. Avoid the word *date* if you think it carries too much baggage in the culture where you live.
- **DON'T:** Always think, "Could this be the one?"
DO: Just have fun. Remember, there is no serious relationship. This is teenage dating, not courtship before marriage. You're learning the ropes, not tying the knot.



HYGIENE AND GROOMING

- **DON'T:** Go straight from your work-out or grubby job to your date.
DO: Put in some effort to look (and smell) good and be clean.
- **DON'T:** Drench yourself with body spray, cologne, or perfume beforehand.
DO: Be clean and well-groomed. Add a hint of fancy stuff if you want. Subtle is better. Some people are sensitive to strong smells or could even be allergic.

ETIQUETTE AND COURTESY

- **DON'T:** Stay glued to your phone throughout the date.
DO: Silence the phone and pay attention to the people you're with, particularly your date.
- **DON'T:** Flirt with other people while on your date.
DO: Save it for another day. For now, you already have a date.
- **DON'T:** Put on a loud performance for all of the people on your group date.
DO: Have fun with everyone, but don't try to be the center of everyone's attention.
- **DON'T:** Throughout the date, check the time, sigh, yawn, and generally act bored.
DO: Practice courtesy, and do what you can to make things fun.
- **DON'T:** Text from the driveway or honk the horn when picking up your date.
DO: Go to the door. And make an appearance before the parents.
- **DON'T:** Blow off curfew—your own or your date's.
DO: Take your date home and return home yourself at the time you agreed to.
- **DON'T:** Once the group date starts, just hang out with your friends (guys with guys, girls with girls).
DO: Pay attention to your date. One of you was brave enough to ask, and the other said yes, so spend time together.

NOTES

1. Consider having a backup backpack. See "Save the Date," *New Era*, Nov. 2015, 27.
2. See, for instance, "Fun Dates That Don't Break the Bank," *New Era*, Feb. 2014, 26–28.

CONVERSATION

- **DON'T:** Talk about yourself the whole time.
DO: Ask interesting questions, and listen closely to the responses. Share some interesting things about yourself, but mostly make it about the other person.
- **DON'T:** Say only negative things whenever you open your mouth.
DO: Be pleasant to be around.
- **DON'T:** Have absolutely nothing to talk about.
DO: You might need to practice conversation a little. Get interested and informed.
- **DON'T:** Use sarcastic, biting, or vulgar humor.
DO: Be genuinely funny, or at least cheesy—maybe some "Dad jokes" to get the groans rolling. Real laughter will usually ensue.
- **DON'T:** Ask awkward questions like "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate me as a date?"
DO: Let go of insecurity and try not to put people on the spot. **NE**

