



Online Dating Safety Tips for Women Over 40

Online dating gets a bad rap with women in the 40+ market. But I believe it is one of the best ways to meet new people in modern society. Where else can you create a profile, list your likes, dislikes and preview the men before you ever go on a date.

I have one girlfriend who said, "I'll never date online!" Which kind of blows my mind because she lives in a small city where she grew up and went to college. She knows a lot of people. She's also friends with the ex-wives of most of the eligible men in her community. She's kind of screwed. But she insists she will find her man the old-fashioned way. I guess that would be at church, a bar or a chance encounter at the market. All of those ways are super overrated. Dating someone from church or work is usually a **really** bad idea. If it doesn't work out, somebody has to leave or you can both stay and feel weird. There is a reason for the expression, "Don't sh*t where you eat."

Online dating seems to be a logical choice. There is a certain amount of vetting you can do ahead of time plus you increase your odds of meeting a nice guy. I look at it as a numbers game. When I dated online (www.okcupid.com and www.plentyoffish.com were my hunting grounds), on a weekend I may view 50 to 75 profiles and be interested in about 8-10 of the gentlemen. From there about 4-6 were interested in me. After a few chats or calls I ended up with about two dates. I was happy with that. I ended up with about four to six dates a month. In comparison, if you go to a local bar there may be five guys that meet your criteria, but how many of them will walk up and talk to you? I truly believe online dating removes many of the unknowns while allowing you to meet some great people that you wouldn't have met otherwise.

After you have spent some time in front of your computer chatting or texting with a suitor and feel somewhat compatible, eventually you will want to meet face-to-face. It is important to remember that even though you have spent quite a bit of time communicating and maybe even video chatting, you still don't know the complete history of this person. So, let's go over some non-negotiable safety practices. Oh, and for the record, even if you meet your prospect at church, bar or market, you **should** use the safety practices, too.

1. **Showing your cards too soon** - It is important keep your guard up no matter how comfortable you feel with a man. Don't share your contact information, including your real last name, where you live or where you work, until you get to know him. Don't add him to your Facebook account or any other social networking accounts. Before you even start looking for online suitors create an email and an exclusive photo that you use only for online dating. A simple drag and drop of a commonly used photo of you in Google could reveal a lot about you. Don't worry, being cautious is not being deceptive.
2. **I spy** - When it comes to dating, I think women should find out as much as they can about the man. I know this conflicts with what I said about revealing your information, but I can live with that. If you know his first and last name look him up on the Internet to see if he really exists or if he's married. If you want to take it a step further, subscribe to an online background system like www.BeenVerified.com. It's about \$20 a month and it reveals a lot, but not so much that you feel guilty. If you don't like what you find, stop interacting with him.
3. **Real phone calls** - I know this is the age of texting, but a nice long phone conversation, maybe a few, is necessary before a first date. The call can save you both a lot of time. Someone's personality via text is much different than their personality on a phone call. If he won't talk to you, don't go out with him. This shows a lack of interest or a pattern he most likely practices with a several women at a time (the six week cycle). Also, hearing someone's voice is kind of awesome. I had an experience with a good-looking guy who asked me out on a date. I explained we would have to talk before I agreed to go out with him. He was nice enough, but dumb as a box of rocks and talked like cartoon character. I'm not kidding. If he doesn't give good voice, that's a problem.



4. **Video chat (Skype, FaceTime)** - Unlike a phone call, video chatting is a nice to have, not a have-to-have. But I will tell you this, if a man will take the time to video chat you, he's probably interested in you. What I LOVE, LOVE, LOVE about video chatting is you get to see them in real time and you can check the way you look before he sees you. (This a time where lighting and camera angle is your best friend.) You see their smile, their laughter and the video chat cuts down the first date nerves by about 60%, because it will feel like your first date. Another advantage is he may display some creepy behavior, smarmy disposition or lack of good judgement that you get to see before you sit through a date. Girlfriend, you just saved yourself some time. Move on.
5. **You've got mail** - I've got to give credit to my client on this one. After talking on the phone or video chat, this smart cookie asks her suitor for a mailing address and sends him a little note of anticipation of their date. If that feels a little too early, she sends a thank you card after the date and then waits for him to let her know he received her gesture. By sending mail, you can confirm a real address, their living arrangements (wife, live-in girlfriend, parents). If they refuse, for any reason (privacy or thinks you might stalk him), think twice about a second interaction. Most guys don't care if you know where they live.
6. **Setting the first date** - Agree on where you want to meet and what you expect from the date. I have found that a first date should last about an hour. Why? Because you will know in less than 10 minutes if you want to continue the date. If you don't, then you only have to sit across from him for another 50 minutes instead of a four-hour eternity. Don't allow yourself to be pressured into meeting before you're ready or for longer than you are comfortable with. *Remember, you are the PACE car not the RACE car!!*
7. **Leave a breadcrumb trail** - Whether you are meeting up with someone you met online or through another method, ALWAYS tell someone, or several people, who you are going with (provide full name and all the info you have on him), where you are going, and when you will be home. I always provided my closest girlfriend a 'first date agenda.' I also called her when I got to where I was going, gave her a text mid-date from the restroom, and let her know when I was leaving and a quick text when I got home. Sounds like too much? Well it's not. I also let the gentleman know that someone was keeping tabs on me. If he got offended or acted indignant, he didn't get a second date. A man that respects women will understand safety. Think of it like this, an indignant man is like an iceberg. Offended and wounded behaviors are usually just the surface. If he is willing to act like an ass so early on, what other behaviors lie beneath?
8. **Meet and stay in public** - The safest place to meet is somewhere public and stay there. Drive yourself to and from the date. Never let them pick you up from your home on the first date. If you feel more comfortable in a group date setting, suggest it during the planning stage. Don't feel pressured to go home with your date. Avoid walking in the park or anyplace that could seclude you for the first few dates.
9. **Get to know the person not the profile** - The way people interact online isn't always the same face-to-face. Don't be offended if your date is more guarded when meeting in person, or if things don't progress as fast face-to-face. Be mindful of what his profile stated and keep those mental notes handy. Watch for conflicts. Getting to know people takes time. Don't assume everything they told you online is true.
10. **Bad date? Call it and leave** - Don't feel bad about cutting a date short if you're not enjoying it. You don't owe the other person anything, no matter how long you've been chatting, texting or talking. It's even okay to say, "You know what? I'm not feeling this between us. I'm leaving, but I wish you the very best luck finding that special person."
11. **Who pays?** - If the guy asked you out, he should pay. If you asked him out, offer to pay. If he won't let you pay, BONUS! However, don't be offended if you asked him out, offer to pay and he lets you. No matter what, always take some cash and a credit card with you on your date. It is also completely acceptable to tell the man during your date planning stage that you would like to go Dutch. Some women prefer splitting the tab so they don't feel obligated. My thinking is, even if he bought you a car during the first date you aren't under



any obligation. He was an idiot for buying a stranger a car, so don't feel guilty. Just remember to have manners and wave as you drive away.

12. **Alcohol Consumption** - Consuming alcohol on a first date is fine. But do be mindful of how much you drink. Keep it to only a couple of drinks. Alcohol can impair judgement and make it impossible for you to drive home. Keep control. Keep yourself safe. Even if you don't drink any alcohol, keep a watchful eye on you drink. If you go to the ladies' room, when you return ask the waiter for a new drink (there is fly in it) or just ask for a glass of water. Yes, Virginia, some people really do put drugs into drinks.