the best places for a FIRST DATE



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The first date is your opportunity to make a positive impression and in order to make a good impression you must be prepared. Perhaps the biggest decision to make beforehand is where to take your date.

Below is a list of suggestions, some of which have checklists to help you prepare for that activity, as well as some handy hints.

RESTAURANTS

As a venue, restaurants provide a great way to get to know someone. Choose a place you know so you will be more comfortable. It's also very cool to call a waiter by his first name. If you haven't got a favourite place already, choose a place with the help of the checklist below.

Good Idea: If you can, do something like see a movie together before you go to the restaurant. This way you have something to talk about. Going for a walk (for example, along a river or through a park) is also a good idea and will allow you and your date to build up an appetite.

CHECKLIST

- Ask your date if he/she has any special eating requirements. He/she may be vegetarian or vegan, or not eat meat but eat seafood.
- Choose a place based on recommendation — Ask people you know.
- Check out the location beforehand.
- Consider the time — Lunch is the best choice for a first date as this helps keep the date casual and relaxed.
- Take the menu and prices into consideration — The offerings should easily fit your budget.
- Find a place with good lighting — If it's too bright, that pimple that sprung up an hour ago will stand out like a lighthouse, making its owner want to sink into oblivion. Too dark and you may not be able to see your date drooling over you.
- Consider the noise factor — Make sure it is easy to talk. After all that's the reason you are there.
- Choose a venue with both efficient and friendly service. (And your waiter shouldn't be a clown called Ronald McDonald.)
- Find out whether you will need to make a reservation.
- Consider the dress code at the venue and dress to suit.
- Apply the Style-Plus-One principle — The principle is this: You go one step better than the next person when it comes to your style/look. Say, if you were at a venue that, on a scale of one to ten, the style/look required was a six, you would aim to be a seven.
- Don't choose a venue that is too small. A tiny room could make you and/or your date feel claustrophobic.



Handy Hint: If you have decided to pay for the date, give your credit-card number to the restaurant beforehand (either during a preliminary visit or when you make a booking). This way you won't have to deal with the bill on the night (which can sometimes be slow and can also lead to an awkward moment with your date if the question of who pays arises.) It is also likely to impress your date. Have them add a 25% tip (misers cringe here) to the bill, which should ensure good service during the date. When you do this, introduce yourself to the person taking the booking, ask his/her name and remember it, and be friendly. Then on the night you can say hello and use their first name. They will hopefully use your name too as they should remember someone who has prepaid!

A MOVIE

One of the most common and safest first dates is seeing a movie. If you choose a movie you both enjoy it will help the date. But beware of choosing a movie that is a dud as it may be a date dampener. Another downside is that seeing a movie doesn't give you much time to talk and get to know each other.

CHECKLIST

- Make a considered movie choice, as everyone has different tastes, so choosing a movie can be difficult. Selecting certain movies can also create a false impression and/or mood for the date. For example, a confronting psychological thriller like *Silence of the Lambs* may depress your date. Or a relationship movie like *Pretty Woman* may put undue pressure on a first date. So come up with a few movie ideas, ask your date which movies he/she likes and choose one between you.
- Select a cinema – Choose a movie that is close to a place where you can have coffee/supper or a bite to eat together afterwards.



- Arrange a time.
- Apply the Style-Plus-One principle.
- Book and collect tickets ahead – This saves queuing and if the cinema has reserved seating you can reserve good seats ahead.
- Budget for cinema junk food. Make sure you have enough cash for coke, popcorn, etc.

Good Ideas:
Plan to have a coffee/supper or a bite to eat afterwards so you can talk to each other. The movie will most likely spark conversation.
Also, if you can afford it and you want to make a really good impression, some of the newer cinemas have deluxe seating. You could book two of these deluxe seats ahead.
Note: Don't raise your expectations – extra expense does not guarantee a successful date.

A STREET FAIR OR MARKET

This could be fun and is a good idea help keep the first date relaxed and casual.

CHECKLIST
- Find out dates and places where they happen.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes, as there may be a bit of walking involved. (Remember to apply the Style-Plus-One principle despite the casual nature of the activity.)
- Walk at the same pace as your date so they don't end up trying keeping up, or stopping to let you catch up.

Good Idea: Perhaps plan to visit the fair/market after a pleasant Sunday drive in the country. If you do this, remember to make sure your car is clean beforehand and have good music on standby for the drive.

Cool Trick: You could hide a picnic hamper in the trunk/boot of your car so when your date says he/she is getting hungry you have a wonderful surprise waiting for them. For more information on picnics refer to the picnic guide in this section.

A WALK ALONG WATER

This is more of a day date than a night date unless the walk is well lit and it is a warm summer night.

The walk could be along:
- A pier – Some piers have facilities, shops and places to eat. You could sit and enjoy a coffee as the boats sail by on a lazy Sunday.
- A lake or body of water with a track around it
- A beach
- Any water/river promenade

CHECKLIST
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes, as there may be a bit of walking involved. (And still apply the Style-Plus-One principle.)
- Walk at the pace of your date so they don't end up feeling rushed trying to keep up, or having to stop as you catch up.
- Budget for a coffee or bite to eat and take some cash.
- If required, take sunglasses, sunblock/sunscreen, insect repellent and a hat.

A STAGE SHOW OR MATINEE PERFORMANCE

If you can afford it, this is great for a first date. Also, because it is during the day, it absorbs some of the stress that can come with a night-time date.

CHECKLIST
- Make sure your date will like the show you plan to see.
- Book ahead if you need to.
- Take cash for interval drinks/snacks.
- Take cash for a show program.
- Apply the Style-Plus-One principle.
- Research the performance beforehand.

Good Idea: Plan to have a coffee or a bite to eat afterwards so you can talk to each other. To start the conversation, ask your date what he/she thought of the show.

MUSEUMS OR ART GALLERIES

Venues like these offer plenty of opportunities for conversation. There is less likelihood of silences because there are plenty of visual stimuli to spark conversation and share opinions on. Also, admission may not be expensive, which is useful if you have budgetary constraints.

CHECKLIST
- Pick a museum/art gallery before the date.
- Find out opening times.
- Book ahead if necessary.
- Budget for admission, snacks and a possible memento gift from the gift shop. (There is usually a marketing shop on site).
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes, as there may be a bit of walking involved. Still apply the Style-Plus-One principle.
- Research the artist/display beforehand.



- Make sure you allow space for your date to speak. Some people are reluctant to offer opinions in case they sound silly. If you feel this is happening pretend you don't know as much (play dumb) as you actually do and this should encourage your date to speak up.

Note: If you have lots of expertise/knowledge on what you are viewing, share your wisdom graciously. Watch out you don't turn into a loudmouth show-off.

Also, walk at the pace of your date so they don't end up feeling rushed trying to keep up, or having to stop to let you catch up.

COCKTAILS/DRINKS



Organising to meet someone for a drink is highly recommended as it often means a relaxed situation that suits many people, especially if staged after work. Also, it gives you a chance to test the water, so if things are going well you can suggest continuing the date over dinner.

CHECKLIST

- Apply the Style-Plus-One principle.
- Choose a bar that isn't known as a singles bar — a singles bar may be distracting and uncomfortable, reminding you both of your single status, which may add stress to the date.
- Make sure there is a nice place to eat that is within easy walking distance of where you are having your drink; that way you have the option of continuing the date if it is going well.
- Don't drink too much — It is a first date and you need to keep your wits about you.

A PICNIC

This date can require a bit of work, but the rewards can be fantastic. Lying on a blanket with your date enjoying nature outdoors in a great location can be a great inhibition destroyer. Lying down relaxes people and being outdoors in the sun having a picnic is about the only situation you'll lie down with someone so quickly on a first date.

CHECKLIST

- Only plan this during a warm weather season.
- Check the weather forecast beforehand — You don't want a date from hell because a twister passes through your picnic, launching you and your date skywards to do some mid-air bonding with a startled cow called Mabel!
- Plan an alternative activity — Have another option for the date on standby in case the weather isn't suitable. Lunch at a café or restaurant would be an obvious choice, but it could also be having the picnic on your lounge room floor.



Apply the Style-Plus-One principle. Wear casual clothes with shoes/runners to do an activity in.
Bring a clean blanket — A proper picnic blanket would be the best choice. A couple of beach towels would also do.
Warning - Damp bums can kill a sexy mood! You may have a perfect day, but if the ground is a bit damp, your date may end up with a damp bum. Bring a plastic sheet and lay it underneath the blanket before you sit down.

Bring a picnic basket — This is the first choice but a box would be okay.
Bring a Frisbee or a kite — If you both have the energy this is a fun way to work off the meal. A gentler choice is to go for a stroll.
Choose a nice location — This is one of the two main keys to success. If you get the location right the date has the right foundation and could potentially be perfect.

CHOOSING LOCATION GUIDELINES:

- Make a list of possible locations and let your date choose. That way if she doesn't know you too well and wants to feel safer, she has the opportunity to choose a more populated spot.
- Aim to not drive too long before reaching the location.
- A park or botanical garden is often a good choice.
- If driving, park near where you are having the picnic because there will be carrying involved.
- The best locations are close to water. Ideally, find a lake or pond with bird life you can watch.

Note: If you want to feed the birds, bring some birdseed with you as this is healthier for the birds than bread. It also shows your softer side.
Choose a location with a view.

- Make sure there are toilet facilities nearby.
- Choose a place that will not be too populated then try to secure a secluded spot. The odd passer-by is okay but too many people nearby will spoil any intimate mood. For example, avoid that nearby family with a radio broadcasting a football game at full volume plus a dozen kids running amok and stalking the friendly deer grazing by the lake. This will not generate a sexy mood!
- Consider the food and drink – This is the other main key to picnicking success. You can prepare the food and drink yourself, or organise catering. Doing it yourself gives you the opportunity to dazzle your date with your prowess in the kitchen.
- Bring real plates and eating and serving utensils.
- Bring napkins. Disposable moist face towelettes are also a good idea.
- Bring more food than you think you need. This way you know your date will not go hungry and may be impressed with the degree of effort you go to.



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