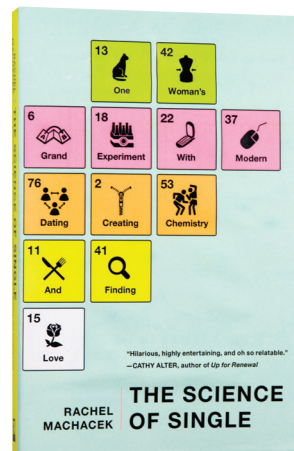


# Date Right

DC native Rachel Machacek, author of *The Science of Single*, tells us how to hunt for a mate. She did the research, you reap the benefits.

NO ONE EVER really teaches us how to date. It's something you just do. But by my early thirties, after being single for the better part of a decade and finding available men had reached needle-in-a-haystack proportions, I thought maybe this dating thing could be smoother. I thought if I made an experiment out of dating in DC, did everything I could do to meet men and learn how to be a better date, perhaps my success rate would move out of the red—or, at least, men wouldn't run away from me anymore (true story). After a year of "research," I came up with a way to make what is a potentially awkward process satisfying and fun. Because that's how dating should be.



## one

**Be open to possibilities.** I've heard people say dating online is a last-ditch effort. Not so. Try it, as well as all the other means of scoring a date: singles events, blind dates or even talking to the cute guy (or girl) at the coffee shop. Don't knock it until you've tried it.



**2** **Have a go-to date outfit.** It should fit well, flatter you and feel comfortable. I follow the rule of removing at least one item before walking out the door. Avoid too-revealing clothing or too much cologne or perfume—basically, anything that requires "too" to describe it.

*The Science of Single: One Woman's Grand Experiment in Modern Dating, Creating Chemistry, and Finding Love* (\$15; Riverhead Trade Paperback Original) hits bookstores January 4.



**3** **Don't get stuck in the drinks/dinner rut.** This is the nation's capital, and there are myriad options for activities! Plan a monuments date or go to a bookstore and buy your favorite novels for each other.

**Men: On the first date, please pay. Women: On the first date, let him pay.** This does not mean he's paying for a seven-course meal at Komi. It means he takes his date to a place he can afford, and if that's the corner falafel joint, then so be it. The gesture is what counts.

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**4** **Be confident.** This is the number one must-have for attraction for both sexes. Fill your life with whatever it is that will bring out your confidence. And learn how to take a compliment. No self-deprecating humor; a smile and a "thank you" is all you need.

**5** **Be up front about what you're looking for.** And be up front about it from the beginning. It's okay to simply want to date around because you're just out of a relationship, new to town or leaving town (DC is transient!). Just make sure the other party knows, because they might be looking for something different.



**6** **Put away your phone.** BlackBerry, iPhone, Droid, whatever. Yes, you are important. But if you text, take a call or, God forbid, do a Google search to verify an obscure fact that comes up in conversation, you're letting your date know that he or she is not important. There's no app for recovering from a bad first impression.

**8** **Trust your gut.** It's important to give people a chance—even the ones you wouldn't normally be attracted to. (Immediate sparks are amazing, but attraction can grow, too.) That said, don't jam a square peg into a round hole. Some might argue one date is not enough. But if you're not feeling it, you're not feeling it. You don't need a reason. Just let the person know (see tip 9).

**9** **End things with class.** If you've determined you're not feeling it, say so; don't get caught up in the "how."

**10** **Come back swinging.** If it turns out it's you who's dumped, don't let disappointment linger. It's not a failure if a relationship doesn't work out. It simply leaves you open to one that does.

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