

# 20 WAYS TO AVOID FIRST DATE DISASTERS



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By Tracey Porpora

## ***Sick Of Dates That Seem Cursed From The Get-Go? Follow These Tried-And-True Tips And Tricks To Ace Your Dating Game In No Time!***

Ever had one of those first dates where just about everything seems to go wrong? You got out of work late so you missed your dinner reservation and had to settle for cold pizza at a neighborhood dive, or you simply had to deal with long, uncomfortable silent pauses where you couldn't think of anything to say. Sound familiar? If so, learn how to avoid those dating disasters by following CW's top 20 tips to ensure your first date with a potential new boyfriend goes off without a hitch...

**1 Be On Time** If you make dinner plans for 8 p.m. and it will take you at least 30 minutes to get to your destination, don't leave at 7:30 p.m. Always allow a few extra minutes for unexpected delays, like traffic jams. "The worst thing you can do is keep him waiting, especially on a first date, because he might be wondering if he's been stood up or not," says Brenda Ross, relationship advisor for Date.com, an online singles dating service. Simply put: Don't be late for the first date.

**2 Stay Sober** You're most likely to make a buffoon of yourself on a first date if you've had

too much to drink. Even if you're a gal who can hold her liquor, alcohol will often make you say and do things you normally wouldn't if you were sober. "Women tell me all the time they were really nervous, so they drank too much on a date and made a fool of themselves," relays Angela Watrous, author of *Love Tune-Ups: 52 Ways to Open Your Heart and Make Sparks Fly* (New Harbinger Publications, \$10.95) and a love advice columnist for PlanetOut.com. "You can only make one first impression. Besides, slurring isn't sexy!"

**3 Plan An Activity You Both Enjoy** If you're both beach bums, plan some fun in the sun, or if he is as much a history buff as you are, meet at a local museum. If you plan your date at a mutually

Angeles-based dating coach and author of *SMART Man Hunting—How to Get Out There, Get Dates and Get Mr. Right* (iUniverse, \$14.95). "While there is a place and time to discuss your ex, the first date is definitely not the right moment."

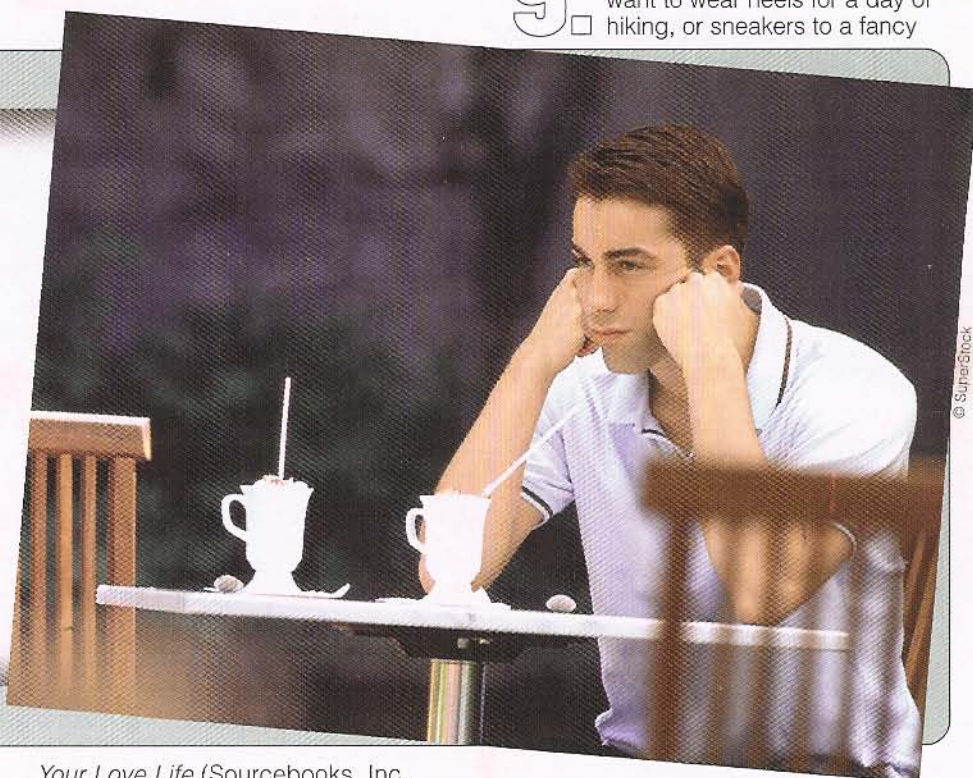
**5 Turn Off The Cell Phone** Nothing is ruder than interrupting a getting-to-know-you conversation to answer your cellular phone. If you're expecting an important business call, don't schedule it for when you'll be on the date and definitely don't take time out to engage in random chat with your girlfriend, recommends Mara Goodman-Davies, author of *A Year of Romance: 12 Months of Romantic Ideas to Light Up*

advises Goodman-Davies. "Don't say you love skydiving to impress him if you're really afraid of heights." Let him get to know the real you, not a version of the woman you think he'd fall for.

**8 Go Home Alone** Unfortunately, many men in their 20s and 30s have the attitude, "If she'll sleep with me on the first date, she must sleep with everyone on the first date," explains Ross. Creating a little sexual tension and making him wait for intimacy will make him feel special. "In general, it's not the best idea to sleep with someone on the first date. It's always better to savor anticipation," she advises.

**9 Dress Appropriately** You don't want to wear heels for a day of hiking, or sneakers to a fancy

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attractive locale, you'll not only anticipate spending time with him, but you'll also look forward to engaging in the planned activities. "Even if you find out you don't like the person, at least you'll enjoy the date if you've picked something you like to do," encourages Mike Domitrz, author of *May I Kiss You?* (Awareness Publications, \$14.00). "Plus, you knock out the risk of your date picking a really lame first-date concept!"

**4 Leave The Exes Out Of It** Talking about past relationships is the No. 1 mistake people make on first dates. He definitely doesn't care how many times you've been dumped or how many sexual partners you've had. "You want to focus on the date you're on, without bringing competition into the room," suggests Liz Kelly, a Los

Angeles-based dating coach and author of *SMART Man Hunting—How to Get Out There, Get Dates and Get Mr. Right* (iUniverse, \$14.95) and a New York City- and Florida-based relationship coach. "If you can't give someone you just met time to talk without a million distractions, he's going to think you'll ignore him once you get to know him better."

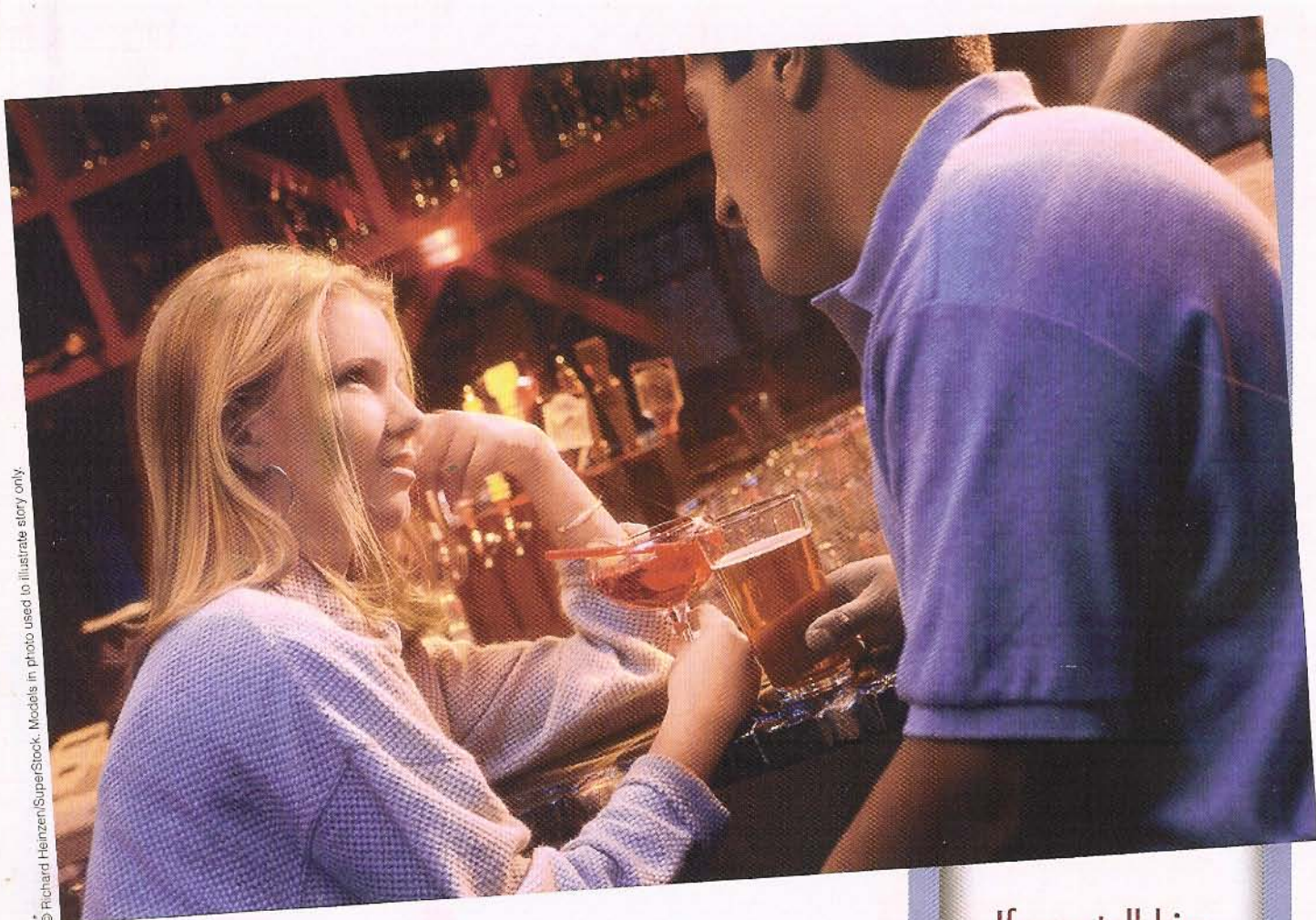
**6 Bring Something To The Table** Most men like outgoing women who are good conversationalists. Maintain an upbeat attitude during the date, even if there aren't any romantic sparks between the two of you. "Go into dates with a lighthearted approach," says Kelly. "You want to be able to use a sense of humor, and joke around with him rather than appearing too stiff and formal."

**7 Be Yourself** Never pretend to be someone you're not. "Don't sell a 'done up' version of yourself,"

restaurant. Make sure you're clear on the date's activities and dress accordingly. "You don't need to dress for the ball if you're simply going to dinner. But you don't need to look like you just rolled out of bed either," encourages Kelly. "You also shouldn't wear something too flashy or overexposed because you can send out the wrong messages."

**10 Leave The Games At The Ballpark** Mind games create winners and losers, and you don't want to risk coming out the loser, so don't test or overly tease your date in any way. "Games create a 'me' mentality and only focus on your individual goal. If you play games, you're not trying to help the other team win," discloses Domitrz, who also speaks across the country presenting a dating program called "Can I Kiss You?"

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**11. Don't Reveal Your Character Flaws** Telling a guy on the first date you're clumsy, uncoordinated and unorganized will likely formulate a vision of a bumbling fool in his head. "You want to put your best foot forward on a first date," offers Kelly. "Everyone has weaknesses, but there is no need to bring them up on a first date because it will damage his impression of you, and first impressions are so important." Instead, flaunt your best attributes without bragging!

**12. Don't Dump The Drama Of Your Day** Men hate whiners and complainers, and if you start out your date telling him about the horrible day you had and how nasty your boss is, your *first* date with him may be your *last*. "Everybody has pressure on them, and everyone gets stressed," reveals Kelly. "It's a big turn-off if all you do is vent on a date."

**13. Offer To Pay Your Way** Never assume he's paying for the date. If you want to be treated like an equal partner, offer to pay for at least part of the activities. (If he pays for the tickets to the amusement park, insist on picking up the tab for the popcorn and sodas.) However, if it's a situation where you're only going to dinner and he insists on paying,

make it clear the next date is on you. "Let your partner know you're looking forward to having a great time, so it's not fair for him to pay for everything," advises Domitrz.

**14. Ask, Don't Interrogate** Be inquisitive, yet keep conversation lighthearted. If you suddenly barrage him with questions about his job, income, family and/or sex life, you're sure to turn him off, or even worse, agitate him. "Don't ask a million personal questions at once," says Goodman-Davies. "Trust that what you need to know will be revealed sooner than later. Make sure the conversation has a natural give and take flow."

**15. Save Finance Talk For Your Accountant** No one needs to know your financial status on a first date, so don't flash your bankbook if you're loaded, and if you're broke, don't whine about it. "First dates are about chemistry," relays Kelly. "There is no need to discuss finances until you're sure there is a chance for a relationship. Finances are a personal thing, and don't have to be disclosed on a first date."

**16. Order More Than Just A Salad** While you don't want to make a pig of yourself on the date, you certainly want to order a

If you tell him everything about yourself on the first date, he may see no reason for a **second.**

full meal, even if you don't finish it. "A million guys have told me how uncomfortable they feel when a woman says, 'I'll just have a salad with the dressing on the side,' or even worse, she orders something and just picks at it," explains Goodman-Davies. "Subconsciously, a guy is thinking, if a woman is afraid of food, she may also be afraid of pleasure."

**17. Don't Make House Calls** A first date at his place means he might be more interested in intimacy than getting to know about you. If this isn't OK with you, plan to meet at a venue where there will be other people. "Making a date at a man's house puts you in an

atmosphere where you have less control," warns Domitz. "Pick locations that are neutral, but great places to talk."

**18. Give Him A Chance** Don't be close-minded about the date if he doesn't exactly fit your description of Mr. Right when it comes to appearance or personality. "If you're not attracted to your date at first, don't look or act disappointed. Even if this isn't a big love connection, it doesn't have to be a disaster," says Goodman-Davies. Remember: If he doesn't turn out to be a love interest, he may make a great buddy, or turn into an important business contact. "Keep an open mind and a you-never-know attitude," she suggests.

**19. Talk About More Than Just Yourself** When getting to know someone,

the conversation should be a give-and-take session. Instead of telling him every chance you get about yourself, learn to listen and ask questions about him. "When you're nervous you might have a tendency to babble on about your life endlessly," forewarns Ross. If you tell him everything about yourself on the first date, he may see no reason for a second.

**20. Turn Off The Wedding Bells In Your Head** If you're secretly imagining what his face is going to look like on your children after 20 minutes of the date, you're moving too fast, to say the least. Approach the date with an open mind and get to know him before you start planning your future together. "The truth is you don't know this person, and even if he appears perfect on the first date, he could be Frankenstein," reminds Goodman-Davies. **cw**

# FIRST DATE FIASCOS

**Unfortunately, first-date fantasies of falling in love with Prince Charming can quickly transform into dating nightmares! CW has your stories...**

of my chair and wanted to get away from him as fast as I could."



**Holly, 28, public relations executive**

"I went out with a guy I met at a bar. We went to a Mexican restaurant and he suggested we share one burrito. I wasn't *that* hungry, but I could have eaten my own dinner!"

**Liz, 25, marketing technology assistant**

"First of all, my date was an hour and a half late because he said he was busy hanging out with his brother. Then at the end of the night, he leaned in for a kiss and said, 'You have a great set of tits. How about inviting me in to spend the night?' I said, 'Not tonight!' and ran out of the car."



**Lindsay, 24, business analyst**

"I had a date to go out to dinner with a Harvard grad I met at a bar. When he came to pick me up he said dinner had to be quick because he couldn't leave his dog alone too long in the car. Apparently he was living in his car with his dog while he was between homes!"



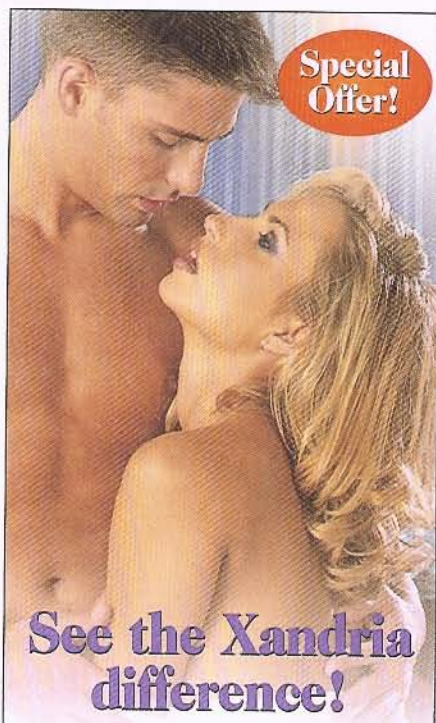
**Kari, 24, executive recruiter**

"I met a police officer late one night on my way home from the bars, and he asked me out for the next night. I love men in uniform! Unfortunately, when he showed up he was

wearing tapered jeans, boots from the '80s and a swimming T-shirt. He was so unattractive I couldn't handle it. When we sat down for drinks, I went to the bathroom and never came back."

**Shawna, 28, student**

"My date showed up at the bar where we were meeting dressed in a T-shirt with gross armpit stains and looking like an unshaven slob, and he had nothing to say. We ended up ordering two or three drinks and when the bill came he didn't reach for his wallet so I paid. We then went to a nice restaurant of his choice. We ordered dinner and an expensive bottle of wine, and when the check came he didn't reach for his wallet again! I just about fell out



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