

Online Dating and Personal Security

Beware the Online Dating Schemers

Imagine you (or your friend, son or daughter) **date or are thinking of dating** - through a reputable, online dating service. This will automatically give you a degree of reassurance about the source of your dating prospects.

But, let's be real. Any online dating service will tell you that despite all procedure and precaution none of them can absolutely guarantee your romantic dates are squeaky clean. That job is up to you.

Warning: This information page is not nice - but it could be a lifesaver. Clearly, since you are taking the time to read this article, you are keen to discover what you need to consider before joining a dating agency or, having joined a dating agency. So here it is. Take a few moments of your life - because it is precious - and see how to reduce your dating risk to "as low as possible." It involves two easy steps.

Risk Management

Everything we do, every activity we engage in carries some level of risk, even if it is 'extremely low risk'. In business, risk assessment is about not shying away from the acknowledgement of that risk, and then running a quick and easy risk assessment over the business or a particular department or project to identify what practical things can be done to reduce the risk level to the more desirable 'extremely low' level.

Imagine giving your personal information to a stranger – or to many strangers, about whom you know nothing for sure. Personal information exchanged through a dating service may be honest at your end, but there is no guarantee your prospect or date is being equally honest in the information they give you, or in their intent. Ditto for your in-person meetings or email exchanges.

You have seen it on television, in movies and read it in crime fiction novels. Some people are up to no good. They can be clever and work at setting up the conditions they need to achieve their goal. You, or someone like you, may be a means to an end for them, and neither the means nor the end may be in your interests.

Don't be squeamish. Name the risk. What could they be up to?

It does not take long for someone to learn a lot about you, your history, family, habits, work, friends and haunts, and finances. It is possible someone may be prospecting for:

Money: a sugar daddy/mommy/family

Theft: a person or place loaded with goods and ripe for the picking

Sadism: someone to psychologically toy with, stalk, harass.

Scam: a gullible prospect for an investment or emotional scam

Hiding: a family and life to slip into and establish a new identity

Industrial espionage: getting inside information from you about your company/workplace/colleagues or worse.

Questionable Online Dating Prospects. It is true your date may simply be a garden-variety weirdo. But that usually stands out soon enough and so you end the liaison quickly. No problem there, low risk, you move on.

But what about those who are smarter, or more skilled? How do you spot a problem date who is smart enough not to look problematic? How do you deal with them? How do you ensure you are not taken in, yet do not turn yourself into a suspicious, nervous wreck just thinking about the possibility?

Managing your dating is a two-step process. If you take these two steps you can relax and enjoy your dating, knowing you have identified the possible risk and acted to reduce it to 'as low as possible'.

How To Reduce Online Dating Risk With This Two-Step System

First, **take precautions**, just like you do in the bedroom.

Second, **use due diligence**, just like you do with a business partnership or your investments.

One - The Basics When it Comes to Online Dating - Precaution

Until you know you want to take your date somewhere serious in your life, it is possible and advisable to have a line you do not cross. This information line relates to various aspects of your life and identifies how much of it you will or won't open up to your date at that earlier stage.

You choose. It can include current information about yourself, your past, the details of your daily and weekly routines, areas of vulnerability (a solo morning run around an empty park), fears, your friends and their addresses and workplaces, and even where you live. This is to begin with and can remain so for as long as you feel the need.

How much and what information to disclose? You may want to meet for a while in venues you don't usually frequent. You may want to leave your car at home and take public transport, which keeps your car registration out of the picture and will more easily expose anyone following you home to see where you live.

This line of what information you will give and withhold about your life is a form of simple self-preservation. A precaution. Do not hand over the keys to your life until you want more intimacy with your date **and** have done the due diligence.

Two - The Basics When it Comes to Online Dating - Due Diligence

Okay. So you want the relationship to become more serious, you want your date to come further into your life. When you get to this point, be clear with yourself sooner rather than later that this is what you want, and carry out due diligence before stepping up the relationship.

Run checks. You can do some of these checks yourself. Or, you can hire a private investigator to run the checks for you. A PI may have greater access to information and resources than you do, for example, they may be a paying member of a website or organization that provides more information about people than you can get for free on the internet. Here's one relatively inexpensive site where membership gives you, the private individual, a massive resource base from which to run due diligence checks yourself – you need to be connected to the internet then use this virtual detective option: <http://tinyurl.com/2auzf8>.

The usual items people ask to have verified.

Name
Age
Address
Current Employment
Work History
Car Registration
Social Security
Criminal History
Financial History/Records
Property/Shares Portfolio
Associates/Friends/Childhood Connections
Memberships of professional, business, sporting or personal organizations
Qualifications – secondary, tertiary
Business/Social/Community Recognitions/Awards/Achievements
Hobbies – participation in groups, clubs or paid activity venues
Marriages/Divorces, Previous & current partners
Unusual personal events, e.g. involvement in a car accident, house-fire, international relocation, frequent residential relocation, frequent travel for business or personal reasons, other.

Of course, sometimes it is not an individual piece of information you collect in your investigations that rings an alarm; it can be **discrepancies, gaps and contradictions** between those individual pieces of information. The information gathered in your due diligence process may raise anything from mild to serious questions for you. What you do with that and decisions you make based on that are up to you. Generally, problem solving with your head is a smart way to go; prevention is better than cure etc.

Addenda

1) Self-confidence

It is perhaps too obvious to be said, except for some, so...

Before you begin your dating process, assess your self-confidence and if needed build up the confidence you have in yourself as a person. It's a big, wild world. Ensure you are strong and competent. Those who more closely fit what is considered "the victim criteria" are more tempting targets for bad guys looking for a target.

Not doing your due diligence can put you into that category. Not being able to stand up for yourself, **without even thinking about it and without a twinge of guilt in doing so**, can put you into that category. Do a quick self-assessment. Take action if you don't pass muster – a personal development book or audio course, an in-person course with an expert, some self-defense training.

Reframing this from a psychological standpoint, you don't want to be searching for a mom or a dad to your juvenile child. This will raise the risk level enormously. You are a responsible adult. Make sure you have the basic skills to run your own life and psychology and decision making before bringing someone else (initially a stranger) in real close.

Do the personal development work necessary to ensure you won't be handing over control of your decision making or emotional processes to others, especially if they are people you haven't even run due diligence on.

2) Your Disaster Plan

It is absolutely vital that you have the information about your dating activities in a safe, accessible and known place, in the event of a problem. This will enable those close to you, or the police if it comes to that, to track you and help you as quickly as possible.

Be smart, be safe, then have fun.

The author is a qualified private investigator and Director of the **SEaPS** online store:
[Surveillance Equipment and Personal Security](#).

For a free ebook, by long-time expert Greg Reynolds, on stopping spam, viruses and hackers:
<http://www.surveillancerequipmentandpersonalsecurity.com/securityupdate>

For more personal security information, articles or products:
<http://www.surveillancerequipmentandpersonalsecurity.com>

For security news updates:
<http://www.surveillancerequipmentandpersonalsecurity.com/newsupdates>

© *RT Håg* 2005. 2008 Reprinted with updates.

This document may be reproduced in its entirety for electronic or paper publication. No permission is granted to alter content or layout in any way.



