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Eva Scott's

# GROWN-UP GUIDE TO DATING



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## DATING FOR GROWNUPS

Welcome to my practical guide on dating. Chances are you've been out there already and know just how hard it is to find a good date, let alone a good relationship. While this guide cannot guarantee you'll find one, it will help you direct your efforts and stop you from wasting time on losers.

Why do I think I know what I'm talking about? I started dating at fourteen and finished at forty. During that time there was a significant relationship. (Ended tragically. Will tell you all about it over a bottle of wine sometime.) There were lovers, short term relationships and dates that were pleasant but went nowhere, and my fair share of dating disasters.

My key dating lessons were learned in the 90s which now seem like a faraway country where computers were clunky, mobile phones simply rang, wine bottles had corks, people wrote letters when they wanted to communicate, and a lack of privacy laws meant you could stalk anyone you wanted.

A lot has changed. Thanks to online dating, privacy laws, smart phones, the internet and DMs we are more connected than ever before yet sometimes it can feel harder to find that special someone. Technology, social habits and culture may change with the times, but people fundamentally don't.



Let me take you through my tips and tricks, the ones I used and the ones I discovered over the years. We'll talk about: where to look for a date; how to separate the good guys from the not-so-great ones; how to keep your expectations realistic; where to go on that first date; and how to present your assets. Also, we'll talk about the most important thing of all, how to keep hope alive when things seem utterly useless.

All this, and possibly a few laughs as well.

I finally found my happiness and I hope you'll find yours too.

## THE HOT-O-METRE: RECALIBRATING YOUR EXPECTATIONS

The number one biggest challenge for any woman is finding a decent date and, for a good deal of the time, this can feel like looking for a needle in a haystack.

In your late teens and twenties, things were not so hard. Everyone was young, beautiful and largely single. Its later, after babies, careers and divorce, that things get a little trickier.

The truth is, you're going to be dating a second-hand man, one that's already been broken in by someone else. (Or maybe just broken.)

This is a good thing. Trust me. You don't want the other kind, the ones who have not learned about relationships through experience and still live at home with their mothers.

You are not going to find Mr Perfect. There is no such thing. No human can aspire to perfection so don't put the pressure on yourself or your date. You'll be looking for Mr Perfectly Imperfect. Or maybe even Mr Right Now.

And on the subject of the perfectly imperfect, lets take a look at your list of requirements, your own personal Hot-O-Metre. Everyone has one even if they're not keen on owning up to it.

Before we begin, take a moment to write down what it is that you're looking for in a man. Don't edit yourself. No one is going to read this list so feel free to be completely honest. Go on, I'll wait....

Now that you're done, take that list and tear it into tiny little pieces. Throw it in the bin. Yes, I'm serious. Unless your requirements list the way you want to *feel* with a man it's not worth the paper it's written on.

You can be so busy looking for the six-foot tradie with a dimple and sparkling blue eyes that you miss the real gem standing right in front of you. And please remember, if you can't offer Jen or Angie then you can't expect him to be channelling Brad Pitt. His physical stats are not as important as his energy. You're going to hear me say this *a lot*.

Have too firm an idea of what you want and you're likely to find yourself on first name terms with the people at the cat shelter.

Stay open to all the possibilities.

So where do you find these possibilities? Good question. The days of hanging out at pubs, and nightclubs are possibly behind you. If not, you'll soon realise that everyone there looks about twelve years old which only serves to make you feel as if you're seventy.

Dating apps are the obvious go-to. Do a little research before you sign up and make sure the site suits your purpose. Sometimes they can feel a little meat-market if you get my drift. One thing I discovered on my personal journey was that the profiles people post are of their aspirational selves, not necessarily their real selves. Take that on board as you create your own profile and as you read others. A little sparkle and polish is fine, but it's probably wise to keep things within the bounds of reality.

Some dating sites pride themselves on matching you with people of like interests. This is, on the surface, great as it gives you both something to talk about and potential date activities. However, I'd like to share with you my story just to keep perspective on these things.

When I met my now-husband, Big G, he was as bald as an egg and dressed in a lime green Hawaiian shirt, the kind that you need sunglasses to look at. He was a Sergeant-Major in the Australian army, a heavy metal aficionado and a biker. I'm going to be totally honest here and tell you that NONE of these things were on my list. Not one. If I'd found his profile on a dating site I would have swiped on by. And I think it's fair to say that he'd bypass me on paper too. I was a big-haired, EDM loving, yogini who talked way too much.

Yet, somehow, we are the perfectly imperfect match for each other. Having differences means we always have something to talk about and new territory to explore. While the superficial things vary, at heart we share the same values, the same sense of humour and the same way of seeing the world. We are each other's best friend and we didn't get together until we were in our forties – so don't lose hope just yet.

If you're not keen on dating apps and sites, consider putting yourself outside your comfort zone. If you go to all the places you usually go, and see all the people you usually see then you'll get the result you always get.

Try travelling to a neighbouring suburb when you take your pooch to the dog park. Give a mixed gender sport a go. Don't mind that you've not played sports since high school. There are some great events like Park Run (no running required if it's not your thing) that you can meet and connect with new people.

Take a moment to think about all the things you wanted to try but never did. Are there any you can sign up to now? Meeting new people may lead you to meet the man of your dreams. He might not be at that mosaic class but his sister might be. By stretching your wings you open up new possibilities.

Take a trip. Plan an adventure. Try a hiking group. Take a language course. Get out and go to markets, walk in new neighbourhoods, have coffee in a new café. Be bold and brave. I met Big G in Papua New Guinea after I got fed up with my boring, go-nowhere suburban life and went on an adventure. No need to go so far. Get on your local Facebook community page and see if anyone is arranging any get together events. Take a look at Meetup.com and join in with something. Go to a book reading/stand-up comedy show/local theatre event. Make connections. Your life will be all the richer for it regardless of whether you meet that special someone or not.



## 7 TIPS FOR GETTING GORGEOUS

You've met someone interesting and you're ready to meet. Here are my suggestions for getting your first date outfit right regardless of your age or curvaceousness.

### #1 Pick one: boobs or legs

Got a stunning pair of pins? Show them off to advantage with a pair of heels and a hemline north of your knees. Got a cleavage to die for? Get that push-up bra out of storage and find yourself a V-neck STAT.

What's that I hear you say? You've got great legs and a fabulous rack, and you want to show them all off at once? Sure, go for it but I have to warn you that you run the risk of looking cheap or worse yet, for sale. By highlighting just one of your assets you can keep things classy while creating an interest in what may lie beneath the rest of your clothing. Just an old fashioned, tantalising thought.

### #2 Pick one: eyes or lips

A dark, smoky eye can be incredibly compelling while a strong lip can be super sexy. Put the two together and you may end up looking like a drag queen or a hooker. Possibly not the vibe you're going for.

If you're picking eyes, take your time to highlight them to your best advantage with shadowing and liner. Try an eyelash curler and a good mascara. You might even fancy some false lashes to give your look a little boost. Keep your lips neutral so your eyes draw all the attention.

If you're choosing lips make sure you've got a good quality lip liner and lipstick. Remember to blot and layer old school style and your lips will last the distance. Keep your eyes soft with a lick of mascara so your mouth gets to do all the talking.

Unsure of how to apply makeup? Things do change as we age. Our skin is not as dewy and there are (heaven forbid) wrinkles to work around. There are many good makeup videos available on YouTube. Do a search for a makeup tutorial for your age and see what you can find.

### #3 Wear something that fits

A friend of mine once brought a size twelve dress for a special occasion when she's really a size sixteen. She intended to fit the dress by the time the occasion came around. She didn't

lose quite enough weight in time and her husband couldn't understand why she simply didn't buy the dress in the right size. Good question.

Yes, you may be able to squeeze yourself into a pair of size ten jeans but the effect will be ruined by the handfuls of muffin top spilling over the waist band. Don't be sucked into the vanity of the size tag. Wear something fits, regardless of size.

Your outfit should skim your curves without creating lumps and bumps or constricting your ability to breath.

#### **#4 If you don't normally wear high heels, don't start now.**

I've held my breath with my heart in my mouth, watching women tottering along in impossibly high heels beside their dates on a Saturday night.

You can tell if a woman is comfortable wearing heels. Her stride looks easy and you'd have to look to tell what kind of shoes she's wearing. Women who only wear high heels on special occasions tend to walk on their toes and seem to be thinking about every step they take.

I'm not against high heels by any stretch of the imagination and spent *years* wearing them. I stopped some time ago and you'd never know that I wore them at all if you see me walk in them now. It's like someone strapped me on to a pair of stilts and gave me a shove. If you'd like to wear a heel, pick something you can manage, this might look like a wedge or a three-inch rather than a six-inch heel. It's not about being comfortable – whoever said heels are comfy is clearly lying – it's about being confident and in control.

#### **#5 Remember, no one's knees look great over 50.**

No one.

This tip is potentially controversial but I don't care. Check out over-50 super models and you'll see what I'm talking about.

Knees, like necks and hands, show our age mercilessly. If you don't care about slightly saggy knees, great – go for it. I just thought I'd mention it in case you needed to know.

#### **#6 Dress like you would for a night out with your best girlfriends**

Seriously, picking your outfit can be this easy.

Maybe you'd really fancy something a bit sexier or with a little more sparkle. No problems there, just ask yourself this question: are you dressing for a one night stand or for

a relationship? Think about where you'll be going and what you'll be doing. Then refer above to tips 1 through to 4.

## #7 Energy trumps everything

Here's what I think, it doesn't really matter what size or shape your body has morphed into over the last twenty years. I bet you've had kids, or gone through menopause, or a whole bunch of life stuff. We all have. You cannot expect your body to be the same as it was when you blossomed from girlhood into womanhood, any more than a rose can reverse itself back into a bud.

What's important is the energy you give out.

I don't mean the kind of energy you need to juggle the school run, a corporate career and complete a marathon at the weekend. I mean the warmth of your spirit, the vibe you give out, the stuff that makes people want to be around you.

I have a friend who is curvaceous in that lush island-girl kind of way. She's not classically 'magazine' beautiful, but you know what? The more time I spent hanging out with her the more she came to be the most beautiful woman I have ever met. Why? Because of her gorgeous, addictive energy.

Be *that* woman.



## 9 WARNING SIGNS TO IGNORE AT YOUR PERIL

### #1 Avoid men wearing white shoes

This applies to any kind of white shoes, even the cool streetwear kind (insert brand here). They imply that the wearer harbours a kind of vanity that will probably come back to bite you in the future.

### #2 Best he be employed

Not necessarily in the I'm-a-brain-surgeon/lawyer kind of way, although that would be lovely. Any kind of employed is just fine as it shows a capability to pay for his half of dinner.

### #3 He lives with his mother

Yes, there may be some very valid explanations why a middle-aged man (or any man for that matter) still lives with his mother. His ex-wife cleaned him out, or he's the primary carer for his aging parents, or any of a dozen other reasons. Either way, he lives with his mother and unless you want to provide him with a substitute, I say move on.

### #4 Can't pay for his half of the date

If he asks you to pay for the date because he forgot his wallet or for some other financial reason far more creative, this raises a red flag. I once had a date spring this on me after he'd spent his money on a new shirt and didn't have enough for dinner. Rather than reschedule the date, he expected me to pay for us both. Splitting the bill is more than acceptable. Having the bill dumped on you at the last minute tells you everything you need to know.

### #5 He declares his undying love

If he declares his undying love or starts talking marriage by the end of the first date there's a very good chance he's a delusional stalker. Jog on.

### #6 He gets drunk.

Enough said.

### #7 Poor personal hygiene.

This could range from halitosis, to body odour, to not being bothered to shower after a sweaty day at work. You be the judge. Bear in mind that if he's not making much of an effort on the first date, it's all downhill from here.

### #8 He's self-obsessed

If he talks the entire time about himself and doesn't break monologue once to ask you about your life I don't think we need to discuss this topic any further. You know what to do.

#9 He's obsessed with Boney M

Okay, so this one is personal but take it from me... run.



## 8 TIPS FOR SAFE DATING

I've had two, maybe three, dates that were genuinely scary. How your date has presented himself to you initially is all you have to go on, and it isn't much. Make sure you put in place some precautions, know where all the exits are and play it safe. Here are some tips for making sure that first date is a safe date.

### #1 Go public

Make sure you meet in a public place. A café or pub is fine, especially if it's one you know well. If you know the staff at the venue, let them know you're on a first date so they can keep an eye out if you need some help getting out of a sticky situation. Pick a time when there will be a lot of people around as this will discourage a potential predator from putting you in an unsafe position.

### #2 The who, what, when and how

Tell trusted friends and family who you're going out with, what you're going to do, how you're going to get to and from your date and when you expect to be home. It's a good idea to arrange a check in with someone to let them know how you're doing. You may want to use a code word in a text so if you do find yourself in an unsafe situation you don't alert your date and inadvertently escalate things until you can get help.

### #3 Get there under your own steam

Once upon a time it was *de rigueur* for a man to pick you up for your date. Not so much anymore. Whether you take public transport, an Uber or drive yourself make sure that your departure point after the date is a safe place. If the date hasn't gone well you don't want to be stalked back to an empty carpark somewhere. Nothing good ever happens in empty car parks....

### #4 Don't leave your food or drink unattended

I can't emphasise this enough. I've had friends who have had their drinks spiked and the first they've known about it is when they wake up in a strange location hours later. Do not let this be your story. This tip can be tricky if you need to use the restroom during a date. Try to go between courses or drinks so you reduce spiking opportunities.

### #5 Do not get drunk

I know I don't have to explain this one to you because you're old enough and wise enough to know better. Play it safe and don't go out on an empty stomach anyway, okay?

## #6 Don't get personal

However nice Mr Right Now might seem, refrain from giving him any personal details about your life, like where you work or places you like to go or your address. Time enough for that later when you get to know him better.

## #7 Google him

I once upset a date who found out that I'd googled him. I don't know why he was upset as he'd had quite the journalistic career and had even written a book. Maybe he was worried about what I might find if I started digging? A google search will act like a quick background check. If there are any nasty things he's hiding then his social media might tip you off in advance. Don't feel bad about checking him out online. I wish we'd had internet access in the 90s. Might have saved me some grief. You know what your mum says, better safe than sorry.

## #8 Be authentic

I know I don't have to tell you this as you're a smart cookie, but it bears reminding you. If you've misrepresented yourself online then you might find yourself on the receiving end of disappointment or even aggression when your date realises the photo you used is fifteen years out of date. Be real. Be you.

I know all this advice sounds like a downer, that you may think I'm being overcautious. Predators are out there. I've met them. I've had dinner with the Devil himself. I hope you never have to. Keep your instincts alert and stay relaxed. But remember this, everyone said Ted Bundy was a charming, good looking guy.



## CHASING THE RABID KITTEN OF LOVE™

*'I can't even think about that right now,' said Sarah. 'My feelings are all tangled up like a ball of wool belonging to a rabid kitten.'*

This is a coin termed by a character in my novel, *Lonely in Longreach*, a story about the consequences of online dating and falling head over heels in love.

The Rabid Kitten of Love™ comes into your life and turns you upside down. You won't know where you start and where you finish. You'll be like a ball of wool a kitten has destroyed. Everyone wants to be that ball of wool. Everyone wants to be bitten by that kitten.

Falling in love can offer you the most incredible highs, and lows. Love can add dimension to your life, enriching and expanding it. The problem is the Rabid Kitten of Love™ can prove very elusive.

I genuinely believed I'd never find love again. I call those years my Wilderness Years. I remember very clearly how flat and depressed I could get after yet another disappointing date. I was wandering the dating wastelands, trying to come to terms with the fact love may never happen to me. Ever feel that way?

Finally, I met a man who might not have been the guy I expected to end up with but he's the man who makes me feel like a queen – loved, cherished and safe.

Before I leave you, I want to talk about hope and how to sustain it. I want to talk about how to keep hunting for that kitten in ways that doesn't result in you becoming the Crazy Cat Lady.

There will be times when the lack of love feels personal, as if you're not worthy of being loved or that there is something wrong with you. This is categorically not true. We all feel this way at one time or another. Think of it as passing through a particularly rough patch of territory. Do not make the mistake of unpacking your emotional baggage and setting up camp there.

The trick is to create a tool box for those times. Fill the tool box with things to sustain you, to lift your spirits and get you back on track.

My tool box contained 90s romcoms that, while completely preposterous, made me believe in romance again. I had certain books that reminded me of how love felt. I had a

playlist guaranteed to get me enthusiastic about love again. I didn't use these things all the time, only when I needed them. They were cheap, positive tools that helped realign my thinking, because looking for love is a head game and how you think impacts the energy you put out into the world, which in turn impacts your appeal.

When you find yourself deep in your own head, get into your body. Do some exercise, take a walk, try yoga, or dance to the radio. You will feel better, I promise.

Take some positive action like searching Meetup.com for a new interest to try, or arrange with a girlfriend to give a new venue a go.

Don't wallow in self-pity. Don't give in to the negative voices in your head.

While some may find this suggestion bordering on delusional, try believing in Destiny and Magic. Try believing that there is someone out there who is meant for you. Try believing that the Universe is going to engineer a meeting one way or another. Try believing in signs and coincidences. Try because the alternative mindset is bleak and bad for your mental health. Try because you're worth the effort.

I wish you all the love and luck in the world

*Eva xx*

## ABOUT EVA SCOTT

I come from a family of storytellers and I have been writing my own stories since I could hold a pencil. Not terribly good ones, but the intent was there.

Growing up in a multicultural neighbourhood in Melbourne helped me develop my curiosity for people. While I like to explore what makes us different, the things we all share at our core are the most interesting to me. Growing up multicultural also gave me wanderlust and a passion for culture and language. As soon as I was able, I travelled the world, always seeking connection with the people I'd meet. No surprise to discover that, when I returned home to Australia, I embarked on a degree in Anthropology.

Before long I had itchy feet again. This time I packed up and headed to Papua New Guinea to live and work. What an adventure that turned out to be, introducing me to my husband and setting my life on a whole new course.

Having struggled with dyslexia, I now volunteer at local primary schools, teaching writing and working with children to incite a love of books and reading. Books are portals into new worlds and I'm excited to encourage children to embrace that concept.

My books explore relationships, culture, our roles in changing society, love and loss. I sought connection through travel and now I love finding connection with readers over shared experiences and emotions.

Thank you for spending some time with me. I hope you enjoy my stories.

More information can be found on my website:

- <http://www.evascottromance.com/>
- <http://www.facebook.com/eva.scottromancewriter>
- <http://www.twitter.com/EvaScottWriter>