

**Make a date with digital Cupid; Webwise**  
**Sally Kinnes**  
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Romance is easier with the help of the web. Sally Kinnes provides tips for Valentine's Day V-Day is only 17 days away. So you've no excuse for finding yourself home alone on St Valentine's Day, cursing your luck like a modern-day Miss Havisham. Fortunately the web has become a digital Cupid, helping those arrows of romance to find a target.

Forget the old idea of desperate geeks lurking in anonymous chat rooms. Today's online dating services find singles of all sorts -be they male, female, young, old or divorced -posting video clips of themselves, homing in on the nearest speed-dating event or brushing up their chat-up lines. Internet dating has gone from marginal to mainstream and Nielsen/NetRatings, the research firm, reports that 3.9m Brits a month visit dating sites.

Online, you can get to know someone by text, video or e-mail, so you could be a mere click away from the love of your life. Or at the very least, someone to share the bill for a romantic meal on the 14th.

#### 1 FIND YOURSELF A DATE

The language of love is written in code, say the BBC's science pages ([tinyurl.com/354eq](http://tinyurl.com/354eq)), and before you explore the personal ads you need help at translating what they really mean. The "warm", "sensitive" blonde who is looking for an "entrepreneur", for example, is actually a gold-digger. Similarly, before you describe yourself as "handsome", "sexy" and "dynamic", it is worth knowing these characteristics come relatively low on women's lists of desirable qualities.

Overall, women are looking for committed, socially skilled, wealthy and attractive men who are sexy -in that order.

Having sorted the semantics, go to the online dating service [www.speeddater.co.uk](http://www.speeddater.co.uk) (the first 48 hours are free, thereafter most people opt for three months at Pounds 10 per month) where features like Who's Viewed Me (check out the list), and Who Likes Me (who has added you to their favourites), will do wonders for your ego.

Once you start dating someone, you can also head back to the site and see when she last logged on. If it was recent, you may not be the only guy she is seeing. Take the free personality test at [parship.co.uk](http://parship.co.uk) and the site will recommend partners screened for your suitability, so if you end up with a bunny boiler it's because you deserve it. One month's membership, Pounds 35.

#### 2 ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

When you tire of scrolling through the plethora of commitment-seeking romantics who, they reveal, haven't read a book since The Da Vinci Code, and use apostrophes like a greengrocer, the personal ads at the London Review of Books ([tinyurl.com/calun](http://tinyurl.com/calun)) will at least raise a smile.

"6ft, own hair, not fat or kinky", one begins; "Ravish me, Mr Caveman", says another who is looking for "exquisite massage and unforgettable sex". A third seeks a "non-smoking Homo Erectus to drag me behind a bush" but, alas, there are no pictures.

Impulsdating.com combines the excitement of the real world with the usefulness of the online one. When you see someone you fancy in real life, you hand them a card with a link to your

dating profile on the site. If they are interested, they can check you out online. In other words, it's a simple way to save yourself the embarrassment of rejection, while keeping hope alive. The first month is free, then it's Pounds 2.50 a month. You print out the cards (free)

from the website.

Postcodedates.co.uk is another handy site. Simply type in your postcode and up come lists of singles events in your area. That might be a singles party in London, speed-dating in Glasgow, or a dinner date in Brighton.

### 3 HOW TO FLIRT & CONVERSE

Erik von Markovik was a tall, gangly 21-year-old virgin. Then he got laid, did some thinking about how he managed it, and now he is a tall, gangly expert in the art of how to pull any woman you want ( [www.themysterymethod.com](http://www.themysterymethod.com) ). According to Erik (now known as Mystery) there are three phases to the process: attraction, comfort and seduction.

The BBC's scientific guide to flirting says you should forget about clever opening lines altogether ([tinyurl.com/e6g6l](http://tinyurl.com/e6g6l)). Attraction is 55% body language, 38% tone and speed of the voice and only 7% what someone says. So stick to mirroring a girl's body language, don't play hard to get and do try something dangerous. According to one experiment, if people experience fear on a date they often misinterpret it as love.

Successful flirting, says Flirtcoach.com, means concentrating on the conversation, not the possibility of a date. And keep your hands to yourself; nobody likes a "space invader".

### 4 SECURING THAT RETURN DATE

Wonder why you never get a second date? See [www.topdatingtips.com](http://www.topdatingtips.com)

[/dating-mistakes.htm](#) and all becomes clear. Among the top offences men commit are: arrogance; being flash with your cash; telling her you understand women; not listening to her; and looking at other women when you are together.

The site claims that men are often far more boring than they think they are, but they can learn to be charming.

Charm isn't sexual, says the online magazine AskMen ([tinyurl.com/23pl4p](http://tinyurl.com/23pl4p)), it's simply warmth. You shouldn't adopt an agenda (like flattery) and you should start with eye contact. You know how everyone always says Bill Clinton makes you feel like the only person in the universe? It's that kind of thing.

Then there is What Women Hate About Single Guys. Top of the list, according to [www.datingtips4men](http://www.datingtips4men) .

com is giving up your status in exchange for her attention and approval. It's closely followed by being needy, clingy and insecure. Bottom line: be manly, not metrosexual.

### 5 KEEP THEM SWEET

Just because saying it with flowers on St Valentine's Day is a cliché doesn't mean you shouldn't, especially if they arrive at work, where your potential paramour can bask in the envy of her friends. At [www.serenataflowers.com](http://www.serenataflowers.com) there are bouquets of red roses for Pounds 30 (free delivery), though the lovely sweetshop bouquet, which contains edible goodies, is far more original, Pounds 35 from [aquarelle.co.uk](http://aquarelle.co.uk). Chocolates are also cliché-proof on St Valentine's Day, especially if they come from [www.artisanduchocolat.com](http://www.artisanduchocolat.com) where a box of dark, lustrous pearls

of chocolate are Pounds 15.50 and a box of truffles with a silver necklace tucked inside the lid combines sweetness with an unmissable message for Pounds 60.

For a personal touch you could upload a set of romantic snaps to [www.photobox.co.uk](http://www.photobox.co.uk) . These can then be printed on a Valentine card (Pounds 3), canvas print (from Pounds 60) or a cushion (Pounds 38). Finally, if you are going away for a romantic weekend, do it properly. That means a four-poster bed in a Scottish castle or a French chateau, from about Pounds 110 a night at [www.celticcastles.com](http://www.celticcastles.com) . This might just save your love life.

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