

How to make the best of internet dating

By Jackie Elton, Founder/Director, Christian Connection dating site

Here are some good tips that have emerged from a recent survey done by [Christian Connection](#) and also some very sound research done by Dr David Pullinger which he used in recent lectures and will form a book.

The mistake many people make is simply to join a site, create a profile and wait for people to respond. Alternatively, they write an email or two and wait for replies. Unless you are incredibly attractive and very lucky (and some people are) this WON'T WORK.

And more importantly you are surrendering the initiative to the other person – it is important to look for people are right for you and not wait to be contacted by somebody who may not be your kind of person.

Success with internet dating requires some proactivity!

Enablers and Blockers

According to social psychologists, the context of online dating is perfect for single Christians. But you have also got to *want* to make it work. There are very strong enablers and blockers to making it work. The two biggest enablers are:

1. Hearing personal [success stories](#) of people you know who have met their partners online.
2. Belief that online dating can be part of God's story and purpose for your life.

The main blockers are:

1. Doubt about whether God can and does work through online dating.
2. Fear of meeting strange people online.

To get going with online dating, we need:

- Intentionality – you have to want to do it and put in the time and effort required
- Courage – to stick with the process and contact people
- To be proactive – both men and women

Social studies have shown that men require social signals from the woman, before they make the first move. How can this translate online, where there are no social cues? Answer: *Everyone can approach everyone within the context of online dating.*

More men think they'll meet their partner online than women

There is likely to be a greater percentage of men online, of any age, than in churches. So if you are a woman, online dating is a good place to meet men.

Too much choice can be paralysing

We are not designed to choose from a large number of options. Studies have shown that someone who has more options open to them are less happy with their final choice than someone who had less options open to them.

If there is too large a pool of people, we tend to evaluate the pool as a whole, rather than individuals. When you stop looking at individuals and only evaluate the pool, you may stop believing that there is an individual to be met.

Don't endlessly trawl through profiles, but limit yourself to a certain number in one session and commit to emailing at least one. Look for similar interests and values on profiles that appeal to you.

Use discussion forums to get to know the real person

[Discussion forums](#) may give you a glimpse of how someone responds in day-to-day life. What are their opinions? How do they express themselves? How do they handle conflict?

You can tell a lot from a photo

Studies show you can actually tell quite a lot about someone from their photo. Just by looking at someone across a room, you can often tell something about that person's family background. But a photo won't tell you whether or not you are compatible. Your own photo must be consistent with your profile. Ask your friends what your photo projects about you.

Talk about *them*, not *you*

Talking about yourself is a turn-off. Talking about the other person is a turn-on. Particularly when writing the first message, use 'you' not 'I'. Connect with something they have written in their profile. Ask questions. Aim for 80-90 words. It will transform your communication and you will get a much better response.

You are more likely to receive a reply on Christian Connection, than other large sites. But you must send a lot of messages.

On average, Christian Connection has a better reply rate than big dating sites in the USA. Studies show the average reply-rate in America is 1 in 4 for men and 1 in 6 for women. The average reply-rate on CC is just under 1 in 3. **Contrary to popular belief, men are more likely to reply than women.** So, on average you may need to send at least 3 messages to get a response on CC. It could be a lot more depending on your age, gender, and where you live. And the style of your profile and email and whom you are writing to.

So don't treat a non-response like a personal rejection; it isn't. Instead turn it into a positive – that's one less person to contact! Don't let it dent your self-esteem. If you do get a response, don't worry about appearing too keen by responding quickly – try to reply straight away and get into a dialogue.

Dating happens offline, not online

Studies in 2008 show that most relationships which started online met face-to-face within one week of making the initial contact. No profile can tell you everything you need to know about compatibility. So if there's any interest at all, meet in person. A short first date is often best. You have no idea whether you're compatible until you meet and remember that there may not be fireworks on the first meeting.

Meet within a month, preferably sooner, and meet with an open mind. Meet with the idea that it may not be the person you'll form a relationship with, but you'll have a good time either way. If you over-invest in your mind, it can sour the date. But if both parties relax and have a good time, it enables conversation and may open the possibility of a relationship developing. One thing is for certain, you will not meet the right person if you don't meet anybody at all.

Risks

Is internet dating risky? What are the chances of meeting a predatory person or getting scammed.

Personal safety

If people are careful, listen to advice, read warnings and do not put themselves in potentially dangerous situations, then they really should be fine. Continue to communicate only via the site until you are ready. Meet in public places, don't hand out contact details until you really feel comfortable with it, don't reveal home addresses, tell your friends where you are, and have an

exit strategy. Remember if you give out your mobile phone number, it may be hard to block calls later. Check for more information about somebody – look online, check where they work and who their friends are.

Scammers

As with vast parts of the internet, there are scammers, often based abroad, pretending to be somebody else. They will appear very attractive, very keen and at some point will make you believe they are in love in you but that they, or a loved one, are in trouble. They will need your financial help very urgently.

Never give money to somebody you meet online. Always make sure they are who they say they are, and that they are based in the UK. In general people are more careful about people they meet online than via their church or their friends. And yet churches very rarely vet their members – most reputable sites do vet all their joiners. But people do sometimes slip through so always be a little careful.

Summary

While it is important to be aware of the risks, most people can have a positive and successful experience online if they approach it in the right way and choose a decent site. Many Christians who have married via online dating have been overjoyed with the experience they have had.

Here are some of the stories from Christian Connection members:

http://www.christianconnection.co.uk/success_stories