

Live Well to
Learn Well

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Approximately sixty percent of people in the U.S. between the ages of 18 to 29 have used a dating app at some point. Here at Cornell, 34% of respondents surveyed by the Cornell Daily Sun (Feb., 2019) reported using dating apps “occasionally.”

Whether you are downloading an app for the first time, or already a frequent user, this information is designed to help you stay safe and be successful.

Be honest with yourself

What are you hoping for? A hook-up? A virtual friend? A date? Something longer term? Think about the qualities you may want in a match, date, or partner, and about all of the qualities you have to offer. Certain apps may be more supportive of your interests than others. Do a bit of research to determine which work best for you.

Rock your profile

Profiles generally provide a snapshot of who a person is along with enough basic information to help initiate a conversation that may lead to an in person connection.

Worried about what to say on your profile? You’re not alone. It can be challenging to know what to say or anticipate how what you write will be perceived. Here are a few basic tips:

- Choose a photo of yourself that makes you feel good about yourself. It doesn’t have to be perfect.
- Keep your profile short and sweet.
- Be true to yourself.
- Describe some of your interests and passions, or an experience that shaped who you are.
- You may want to include:
 - How someone else might describe you
 - Which three things you couldn’t live without on a deserted island
 - Quotes by favorite authors, song lyrics, etc
- Consider including your “must haves” as well as your “deal-breakers” in a date or partner.

Once you’ve posted something, try not to judge your success based on the number of swipes, hits, likes, or messages you receive. The quantity of responses doesn’t always equal quality and isn’t reflective of your self-worth. Your dating profile can capture all of the wonderful, unique aspects of you, and the reality is that most users spend mere seconds on each profile they come across.



Dating apps can be a great place to meet new people, and may carry potential risks

Manage expectations about other’s profiles

The degree of truth-telling on dating apps varies. Some people exaggerate an accomplishment or overly airbrush photos to make themselves seem more appealing. Others will lie outright about their relationship status or age. It can be helpful to have an open mind and assume good intent. However, a healthy dose of skepticism has its place too. It can be a set-up for disappointment to always take others at their word.

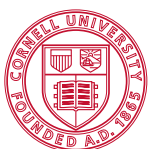
Set expectations around intimacy

If you are interested in getting physical with a match, all parties need to agree. Also, you and a partner have the right to change your mind about what you feel comfortable with, at any time. Affirmative consent is important in any sexual encounter, and matching on a dating app does not imply consent to sexual or intimate activity.

Prioritize safety

When meeting someone from a dating app in person, be sure to prioritize your physical safety. Take special precaution when you meet up with someone for the first time.

- Consider meeting in a public place, with other people around, where you will feel comfortable leaving if the other person makes you feel uneasy for any reason.
- Tell a friend your plans, including where you will be, who you will be with, and when you expect to return. Make a plan to check in later.



- Set an expectation for safety, whether or not you end up hooking up. This includes using barrier protection to prevent transmission of STIs, and using contraception if pregnancy is a concern. Not every STI can be stopped by use of barrier protection (e.g., condoms and dental dams), but most can. Think you can tell just by looking if someone has an STI? Think again. Most STIs can exist without symptoms for a long period of time. Worried you may have been exposed to an STI? All students can access free and confidential STI/HIV screening at Cornell Health through the student health plans (SHP or SHP+) and the student health fee.

Consider power dynamics

While some dating apps try to subvert traditional power dynamics, inequalities still exist in relationships that begin on dating apps. Factors such as sex, gender, age, ability, and social status can affect the interaction between any two people in a relationship; and sometimes these factors become even more pronounced when meeting someone online.

For example, among college aged students, sometimes older, more experienced users try to exert influence over younger potential partners. In many of the heterosexual interactions that occur on dating apps, men are still taking the lead in deciding when to escalate the relationship. And, while this may be okay with you, keep in mind that there have also been numerous reports of instances of racism, sexism, and other biased or crude remarks exchanged on dating app platforms, in part made possible by the degree of anonymity the platforms provide.

If you experience harassment, look into the application's specific reporting guidelines and/or reach out to a campus resource (listed at the end of this document) for additional support.

Consider the pros & cons for your mental health

Any social media apps can have an effect (positive or negative) on your mental health. Dating apps are no exception. Along with the instant gratification and excitement of dating apps can come some anxiety if we feel like we are not being found desirable,

Questions or concerns

Resources are available to address any concerns you have related to sex, sexual health, or safety.

Cornell Health resources

- **Let's Talk** provides free consultation from Cornell Health counselors at drop-in sites across campus. This may be a good first step if you are experiencing emotional distress connected to online-dating or the use of dating apps. See schedule of drop-in hours M-F: health.cornell.edu/LetsTalk.
- **Sexual Health Nurses** offer free information about safer sex, STIs, and pregnancy prevention. They can make referrals for specialty care if needed. Visits can be scheduled online at myCornellHealth or by phone (607-255-5155).
- **Primary Care Providers (PCP)** are a go-to resource with whom you can discuss any aspect of your health and well-being. If things aren't going well with sex (e.g., you are experiencing physical discomfort, emotional distress, or difficulties with erection, orgasm, or intimacy) start by talking with your PCP. To do this, schedule a medical/nursing appointment online at myCornellHealth or by phone (607-255-5155).

Other campus resources

- **EARS peer counselors** provide a (free and anonymous) listening ear and can help direct you to supportive resources if needed. Call 607-255-EARS (3277); More info: ears.dos.cornell.edu
- **Title IX Coordinator** supports members of the Cornell community with concerns about sexual or related misconduct—including gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, or other forms of sexual misconduct. Call 607-255-2242; more info: titleix.cornell.edu
- **University Victim Advocates** provide assistance to members of the Cornell community who are victims of harmful, threatening, or violent incidents. Advocates support those who have experienced sexual assault or rape, violent or potentially violent relationships, stalking, harassment, physical or emotional assault, bias-related incidents, hazing, or other types of victimization. Call 607-255-1212; more info: health.cornell.edu/VA

or having as much success as our peers. Pay attention to how your time online makes you feel.

Limit use

One of the top reasons people say they use dating apps is that they “simplify the dating process.” In reality, though, there is a difference between efficient dating and effective dating. The use of these apps can be labor intensive, time consuming, and uncertain. Be mindful of the amount of time you are spending on these applications, and whether you might prefer to spend that time engaging with others non-virtually.