

# Dating Around the World

Relationships are universally valued and important in almost every culture. Not surprisingly, dating around the world reflects differences in cultural attitudes, customs and accepted norms.

So, dating success can often come down to understanding the nuances of local approaches to dating around the world. Dates can vary from freewheeling encounters to heavily supervised skirmishes through to a casual outing at the movies.

## Daring To Date

Dating can be simultaneously frustratingly complex or simple. The differences between Western concepts of dating and other cultures can create liberal unfettered dating customs, constrained meetings, and formally choreographed gatherings. In some countries, dating is actually illegal.

As if all that isn't enough for budding Romeos and Juliette's, along came the Internet and revolutionized long-established rules for social interaction forever changing dating around the world. For a guide to the new social nuances, here is our updated guide to dating etiquette.

## Dating Etiquette

Online dating is here to stay. We're here to keep you abreast of all the changes to today's digital dating etiquette.

While technology can liberate our approach to dating, it can kill a relationship just as surely. Smartphones, laptops and tablets have inveigled their way into every aspect of our lives, including dating.

Society as a whole has become so dependent on technology we are in danger of losing the ability to engage in conversation or establish even a basic pathway to communicate with potential dates, other than via texts or instant messaging.

Rather than being a structured, formal process, dating has become so informal and casual that participants lose sight of their goal to identify a prospective significant other.

Although we may never return to the romanticism of past years, there are ways to rediscover that tingle that made dating special.

### 1. Show Interest

While most men, in particular, find themselves eternally fascinating, if you want to establish if there is a connection with your date, you may have to actually cease talking about yourself and discover more about your date.

Park your social anxiety and fear of rejection and focus on your date. Ask them polite questions, show interest and engage. Oh, and stop looking at your phone messages!

## **2. Don't Be Afraid To Be Exactly Who You Are**

Rejection anxiety can make cowards of us all. We often put on our 'game face' and play a public role. While it's fine and normal to be anxious about the prospect of rejection, it's better to put the real you out there than a pale imitation.

The more you reveal your true nature, the higher the risk of rejection. However, you might just be the wrong person for each other. If dating etiquette is a form of social civility, then the first recipient should be you.

Courtesy and respect are the foundations for dating around the world. Set clear boundaries; be clear about your needs and mindful of your date's. It's not always easy but it sets you a path to success.

## **3. The Perils Of Going Dutch**

This can be one of the more contentious aspects of modern dating – why picks up the bill? Is it the man or do you go Dutch? Reality is, it matters little who actually pays as long as someone does. Hagglng over the bill is a guaranteed vibe killer.

After all, being taken out can be kind of sexy. Calculating who had what on the bill is not. It's a definite buzz kill. Mating is delicate business and rituals do matter. So, be decisive and whichever side of the bill you land on always be gracious.

## **4. Don't Express Your Feelings Over Social Media Or A Text Message**

As lawyers like to say, 'words are bullets.' Particularly when they appear on a tiny screen as you scroll down. How men and women supposed to understand each other's intentions without any context or bereft of emotional body language cues is anyone's guess. The Internet loves its own shorthand hence the emergence of "lol" short for "laughing out loud." Unfortunately there is no corresponding phrase for "This comes from the very soul of my being."

Moreover, receiving an "I love you" via a text message is not the world's most romantic setting? Similarly, it's hard to intuit intent from the tone of a font!

## **5. An Unreturned Text Or Instant Message Doesn't Mean You're Ghosted**

Today, we seem busier than ever. Hectic schedules, endless meetings and other commitment all combine for people with busy lives. Almost no one is sitting there, waiting for your instant message or text.

If you are all alone sitting around waiting for an instant message or text to pop up on your screen, it's a sign you need to get out more, take up a fresh hobby, or go for that walk along the beach in the morning.

## **6. Never Breakup Via A Text Message**

There's an old saying, "manners maketh the man." If you've gone out with someone on a couple of dates, you owe them at least a phone call. Instant messages and texts are the coldest modes of communication and it says a lot about you as a person.

What it says is, "I'm too much of a coward to dial your stored numbers in my phone listen to your voice. I'd much rather send it in the form of incomprehensible sentences with abbreviations and emojis instead of actual meaningful words. Civilized mature people don't behave this way, so, not cool.

## **7. Don't Be In A Rush**

In early romantic novels, everything was a production. This was an era where letters were our main means of communication. Formal balls were eagerly awaited and debutants were still introduced into polite society.

Take the time to sniff the roses, enjoy the wonder of a rainbow and relish the wonders of art or nature whichever works for you.

Savor the little things that go with dating around the world. Relax, don't push or try to hurry things along the way. Allow your own romantic tale to unfold at its own pace.

## **American Dating Culture**

There are times when a date in America, resembles a job interview rather than a romantic interlude. The components of dating are simple. Firstly, identify a suitable candidate who doesn't repel you on sight or is likely to slaughter you on the way to or from a date.

Secondly, organize a rendezvous for some form of mutual food or beverage experience. If all goes well and no one dies, arrange a second date, then rinse and repeat. If not, proceed briskly towards the exit.

However, within this well-established format, there are certain aspects of an American date that carry certain nuanced implications for dating etiquette. You need to understand these differences if you are going to snaffle an American partner.

In the land of the free, dating can be all quite business-like. It's the social equivalent of a job interview or a house search, which means investigating more than one prospective mate at a time.

While juggling potential partners initially is considered quite normal in the U.S., always limit yourself to one per evening and never discuss your other dates with the person trying to delicately eat opposite you.

Agreeing to “be exclusive” is a discussion best left for a later stage if things progress well. If it’s not been raised in a discussion as yet, assume your date is currently laughing politely at other people’s jokes too.

This open communication style may not sit comfortably with other cultures, especially those who tend to steer conversations politely away from their feelings. So, whereas at home you might find yourselves going merrily along, without bothering with the whole am-I-the-only-person-you’re-dating? conversation, in the U.S. it’s expected.

Moreover, American dating culture can be far less serious and more readily promiscuous. The American dating scene is geared around “instant gratification” rather than working on improving shared areas or issues of concern, be it communication, personal space expectations or sex.

Most rather, walk away, give up and move to the next than stay and deal with complicated discussions of potentially awkward issues.

### **Chinese Dating Culture**

From the free-wheeling American approach to dating to the far more constrained and conservative culturally nuanced world of Chinese dating culture. Dating in China is way less casual than America and much of this is rooted in China’s long-established, traditionally based and overwhelmingly conservative culture.

Chinese culture always placed a premium on gaining an education, as it has long been the path to status, wealth and success. These in turn help for better matches in a society where men vastly outnumber women.

Given the heavy study load in high school, and the preparation needed for China’s all-important college entrance exam, many families disapprove of distractions such as dating before college.

Many school principals actively deter dating and relationships in an attempt to ensure their students stay focused until graduation. Thank goodness for flirting otherwise Chinese dating culture would be a spiritual wasteland! Even then dating is usually discretely covert and concealed from teachers and parents alike.

Overall, Chinese people are typically less comfortable with dating casually due to the social pressure around relationships. Chinese dating culture is far more geared to arriving at a serious relationship than a casual distraction.

While both Western and Chinese cultures perceive dating as a process, with marriage as an end goal, Western culture is far more relaxed about leaving settling down to later in life.

However, many Chinese women are expected to settle down and marry while still in their early to mid-twenties. There is even an unflattering term for women who fail to marry by the age of 27, "Leftover Women."

This negativity is connected to the importance Chinese culture attaches to marriage as an important enabler of stability and social cohesion. Hence, grandparents, as well as parents, frequently exert pressure on their grandchildren to marry while still in their twenties, while Western trends are for marriage to occur later in life.

### **Russian Dating Culture**

Dating in Russia is generally quite similar to Western norms. After all, people are people the world over. Everyone is looking for love although in Russia the rules can be quite different.

The primary difference is the emphasis placed on old-world chivalry. Russian men are very romantic and they lavish the objects of their romantic affection with flowers, gifts big and small and romantic outings.

Russian women expect men to be polite; to open doors for them, help them into their coats and similar courtesies. The man should never allow his date to carry anything heavier than her handbag and will unfailingly pick up the restaurant bill.

Flowers are seemingly mandatory, even for everyday dates. When in doubt, go with long-stemmed red roses even a solitary red rose is considered suitably romantic.

In Russian dating culture, the onus is on the man to plan the date and it is normal for men to date younger girls. Men are also expected to talk about their (preferably manly) hobbies and sports while being able to make their date laugh. Girls are expected to be pretty with a lot of focus on being good cooks.

Russians appear to be immensely fond of dance venues. Many dates take place at dance parties, balls or at clubs where attendees can enjoy a meal and chat in the security of groups.

### **French Dating Customs**

France has a reputation for romance. Paris is after all, renowned as the city of love. In countless movies, best-selling novels, magazine articles, and on social media around the world, people view the city through rose-tinted glasses.

Culturally, the French have a certain predilection towards affairs of the heart. Flirting seems to be veritably genetic amongst them and they are far less squeamish about public demonstrations of affection.

However, here is where reality collides with the myth. Dating, as it is understood in other Western cultures, particularly America does not exist in France. It is a very American concept, and there is no equivalent word in French for dating.

The French, have a different attitude toward relationships and the process of finding a partner than do say Americans. The French are often introduced to their significant other through their informal social network such as group get-togethers rather than "dating" people they barely know.

In France, women expect the man to initiate their relationship. A Frenchman will continue to chase the woman he is interested in during outings with their mutual friends and at social occasions such as dinner parties.

One of the unstated rules of thumb amongst the French is that a kiss on the mouth signifies you have become exclusive to each other unless you agree otherwise.

French couples rarely resort to the American "talk" about their future together, nor do they feel obliged to announce their decision. Evidence your relationship has become serious enough to last is when you meet your partner's family.

Another aspect of dating amongst the French is their relaxed attitude towards last-minute invitations, usually via a text. When a Frenchman does provide advance notice, you can count on him being habitually late.

Similarly, intimacy in the French context has no dating schedule. Deciding to go to bed with your partner at any time after that first kiss does not label you as being "easy" in any shape or form.

### **Dating Rituals In Different Cultures**

Aside from China, one country where cultural dating is dominated by religious conventions is Iran.

In Iran, dating remains technically illegal. Teens spend much of their social lives conspiring to meet the opposite sex as they are separated until they reach an appropriate age for marriage. Thereafter, their families initiate an introduction, followed by a formal courtship.

In Latin America, teens are rarely allowed to date until they are at least 15 years old. Conventional dating tends to be a group activity, where groups of teens visit local clubs together, especially weekends to go dancing, to graze and chat informally.

In Africa, parents attempt to strictly control and supervise dating. Arranged marriages remain common in many countries on the continent, so dates conform to strict rules.

Even if couples are allowed to date, they are often aware that their families have already chosen a partner for them. Thus the American style dating model, where people look to meet a number of potential partners rarely applies in traditional households.

### **Online Dating**

As the number of dating websites and apps multiply, online dating is assuming increasing importance in society. As more and more people turn to the Internet to find romance and love, society's attitudes to the dynamics of dating are subtly shifting.

Creating a digital profile is increasingly seen as an everyday part of life as we become accustomed to browsing personal profiles and photos on online dating sites. In the digital environment, dating rituals in different cultures are falling by the wayside as members make decisions on who to contact based on a dating profile and photo.

### **Final Observation**

Dating around the world is shaped by cultural norms and social and parental attitudes. In America, dating is a far more relaxed process for teens and twenty-somethings than it is in China where stable relationships are expected to follow on once university studies have begun. French dating customs revolve around an individual's social circle while dating in Iran is, in theory, illegal, requiring great inventiveness on behalf of dating couples to create opportunities to meet members of the opposite sex.