

Dating and Finding a Marriage Partner in the USA

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If you want to find an American girlfriend, boyfriend, lover, or even get married to an American, you need to first understand some American customs and ways of doing things. The tips and text below are taken from the [Life In The USA](http://www.lifeintheusa.com) web site at www.lifeintheusa.com. The full site has more than 600 individual sections that cover everything you need to know to succeed in the USA. If you like, you can click over now to one of the 18 major subject areas to continue your reading in greater depth on the web.

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[Immigration, Citizenship, Green Cards](#) ■ [Medical Care](#) ■ [Death in America](#)

Dating in America

Dating is one of the trickier subjects since many rules and social conventions have changed in the past few decades in America. The greatest changes have involved the role of women in the dating process.

It is perfectly acceptable, for example, for a woman to call a man for a date. Whatever your situation, be prepared to be rejected. If the person you're asking is someone you must see often in the community or work, make it clear that you aren't offended by the rejection and that you are happy to remain friends with the person. If you have to refuse a date, refuse it clearly (though politely) rather than giving an excuse. If you have to break a date, try not to ruin someone's evening by doing it at the last minute.

There is some controversy about whether a woman should offer to share expenses with a man on a date. Unless the man obviously has much more money than the woman, or has made it very clear that he intends to pay for everything, it is polite for the woman to offer to share expenses. If the man turns down the offer and insists on paying, there is no harm done; the woman has shown some consideration. For a woman to assume that a man, otherwise her social and economic equal, should pay for all expenses on every date is old fashioned and unrealistic.

Getting Serious

It would be convenient if there were some rules about how couples begin serious, sexual relationships with each other, but there are too many variables. Just bear in mind that it is possible to “read” another person incorrectly. For example, being invited up to the person's apartment for a drink can mean just that—or it can be an invitation for love making. There is no magic formula, but it is not a good idea to get too pushy about starting a relationship with someone, especially if you are new to the country.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Americans are very concerned about the sexually transmitted diseases, especially the dread disease AIDS. Using a condom for “safe sex” is highly recommended.

Both men and women do and should buy condoms and have them handy, since you never know when you'll need them. If you think sooner or later you are going to have sex with someone, it's best to bring up the difficult subject of condoms and “safe sex” as soon as possible, and get it out of the way. It's hard enough to deal with the subject of sex without having to worry about whether or not condoms will be available and will be used.

If you expect to have sex with someone imminently, and condoms are not available, stop! Go out and buy some. They are available everywhere. If the other person—male or female—gives any indication that they do not think condom use is important or that they have not used condoms with their previous partners, you should be very reluctant to take a chance with them.

Marriage

Once you are in a relationship with someone, do not rush to bring up that other difficult subject—marriage. Half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Laws that relate to the division of property among married people and the financial responsibilities for the children of a marriage are different in each of the fifty states. Marriage in America is made even more complicated by the high pressure lives many Americans lead and the changing roles of men and women.

Marriage and Immigration Laws. If you are thinking of marrying someone because the marriage will give you legal, permanent resident, “green card” status, be aware that the technique only works if the marriage is a real one. If the immigration authorities discover that the couple are not really living together, they will challenge the validity of the marriage. International marriages can have special difficulties, and the impulse to marry sooner than normal just to smooth the immigrant's legal status should be avoided.

Weddings

If you do decide to get married in America, be careful about weddings; they can be very expensive. Traditionally the bride's parents paid for most of the wedding expenses, while the groom was responsible for the wedding ring and the honeymoon expenses. Today, both sets of parents will sometimes share the expenses, or the couple themselves might contribute. Because there are now uncertainties about these obligations, it is wise for everyone involved to sit down together and come to an agreement about who pays what (and about who gets invited to the ceremony). International weddings and weddings between people of different religions will also require special planning.

Maiden Names. In former times, women took their husband's last name after marriage. Many women now keep their original (“maiden”) name, or use their maiden name as a middle name.

Divorce

Divorce is common in the United States and is never pleasant. Each state has a different law regarding how property is divided and how financial obligations to children are met. Since divorce is now common, few people are ashamed of it or try to hide it. Dating again after divorce is not difficult, since so many potential partners are themselves divorced. Since divorce is such a complicated matter, you should almost always consult a lawyer, even if the couple is splitting on an amicable basis.

The following sections from www.lifeintheusa.com give some tips on American grooming standards that will help you better fit into American life.

Grooming and Personal Hygiene

Many Americans bathe or shower at least once a day, more often if they're involved in sports or fitness activities. The American bath or shower involves immersing the body in water and covering it completely with soap lather, often from a deodorant soap. Many Americans use talcum powder after their bath or shower, but virtually all well-groomed Americans use an underarm deodorant before they get dressed. Nearly \$2 billion in deodorant is sold every year. Feminine deodorants and douches are also widely used. There are even specialized foot deodorants. Many Americans also wear *newly cleaned* clothes every day, including underwear, shirts and tops.

Shaving: Men

Men without beards or mustaches shave at least once a day, usually in the morning. Many use shaving lotion or aftershave. It is also appropriate for men to trim the small hairs that stick out of their noses, as well as any hair growing out of the ears. Some American men grow beards, but beards are rarely acceptable in a traditional business setting. They are more commonly found in businesses such as entertainment. Men with beards or mustaches are advised to trim them regularly.

Shaving: Women

American women remove the hair on their legs fairly often in order to keep them smooth and hairless. Special razors are available for this, as well as depilatories (creams that remove leg hair), and waxing techniques. American women (but not men) also shave their armpits.

Hair Care

Many lengths and styles of hair are appropriate for both men and women, but hair should be cut or styled frequently and kept clean. Washing every day is advisable. Hundreds of shampoos and preparations are available on the market to facilitate this. Special shampoos are available to control dandruff (white flakes of scalp that fall from the hair). If you have a dandruff problem, use such a shampoo regularly. Americans consider people with visible dandruff flakes on their hair or clothing to be social misfits.

Tooth and Mouth Care

Americans brush their teeth every morning and night, sometimes after every meal, using a toothbrush and toothpaste. Many Americans also use dental floss, a special string that removes food particles from between the teeth. Mouthwashes, sprays and breath mints are also used to freshen the breath. If you like to eat a lot of spicy foods, especially onions and garlic, or if you drink alcohol, be extra watchful that you don't offend Americans by having "bad breath."

Fragrances and Perfumes

The best fragrance, cologne or perfume to use in America, for either a man or a woman, is a simple one. Avoid heavy musk scented fragrances; these will only offend Americans. When you use a fragrance every day, you get used to the smell and can often put on too much without realizing it. Less is more.

Appropriate Clothing in America

In America, your clothing—whether business or casual—should always be clean, ironed, and neatly worn. Business wear is fairly standard, though northeastern cities like New York and Boston are a bit more conservative than places like Los Angeles. Both men and women in business wear suits, meaning the jacket is of the same material and matches the trousers or skirt. Shoes are well maintained and shined. Women wear nylon stockings of appropriate color for the season. Men wear neckties, and many women wear some kind of neatly tied scarf with a suit.

Do Some Research. If you don't know how you should dress in a particular environment, do some research by observing how other people dress in that environment. Other than in fashion-oriented businesses, conservative American cuts for suits and jackets are appropriate. Since clothing and appearance means a lot in American business, be careful not to spend a lot of money on a high fashion item that doesn't work.

In casual settings, exercise and sports clothing is widely worn by men, women and children, though in some environments it might be too casual. Blue jeans are worn throughout the United States by people in all walks of life. If you are in a casual setting but are afraid of appearing *too* casual, pick up a copy of a major golf magazine, and wear the same type of clothes the golfers do.

Clothing Should Fit. Whether business or casual, the clothing should fit well, and be kept clean and neat. That means wearing a shirt, and certainly underwear, for a maximum of one day before throwing it in the wash. Many Americans find body odor extremely offensive (even though the same odor would not be out of place in certain other countries). The key: clean body and clean clothes every day.

[Life In The USA Web Site](#)