

Dating is a digital minefield. Here are the key things you need to know to avoid sending...



# The wrong signals

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Once ended a first date after 20 minutes. Frankly, it was astounding the number of questionable quips he managed to fit into that timeframe — including a comment that women belonged in the kitchen.

He was a walking, talking red flag, and I wasn't going to wait around for it to get any worse.

From my few years spent dallying with dating apps, I can recall countless similar stories of moments that sent me running for the hills.

And anyone who is dating in 2022 could give you their personal hit list of red flags, whether they are small gripes or major deal-breakers.

A dead fish in a profile photo, casually racist remark or unsolicited nude snap sent without warning are all prime examples.

The term red flag was originally used to highlight problematic relationship behaviours, but its use has extended into more casual territory.

Now, it seems to be interchangeable with “the ick” — the new-age equivalent to an instant turn-off.

Relationship experts will tell you it's helpful to be aware of red flags, but not to discount the positive signs, either.

“There is a lot of confusion when it comes to red flags, orange flags, green flags and everything in between,” Perth-based matchmaker Amanda Harrigan from HYTCH says.

“If a red flag is an alarm bell, the green flag is a little celebratory chime.

With this in mind, this is a handy guide on how to tell a “hell no” from a “heck yes”.

## ON THE APPS

**Red flag: their dating profile bio is blank.** Come on. That photo of the fish you caught isn't so good that it negates the need for any descriptive words about your personality or preferences. Or perhaps you've included a list of everything you don't want in a partner — there are few things less sexy than a negative Nancy whose glass is perpetually half-empty.

**Green flag: their witty spiel makes you giggle.** Unless you're an international person of mystery, a good bio is a must. A winner is someone who manages to convey a sense of who they are in just a few sentences, with bonus points for a solid sense of humour and authentic demeanour. Love negronis, sloths, 90s pop and murder mystery nights? Great, you may just attract someone who feels the same.

**Red flag: all their snaps are gym selfies.** There should be some sort of universal rule that limits selfies to just one on Tinder or the like. Eight identical shots of you pumping iron? No deal. The same goes for group photos where it's impossible to differentiate you from your mates, or pictures that are 10 years old. There's nothing worse than showing up on a date and you can't even recognise the other person. Hashtag catfish alert.

**Green flag: they actually look like their photos.**

This sounds so simple, but can be hard to find. Here are some hot

tips for anyone choosing pics for their dating profile: keep them recent, varied, and for goodness sake — smile! Because a picture paints a thousand words, those depicting pets, friends, hobbies and travel can help make you the equivalent of a golden ticket in the digital stakes.

## THE FIRST DATE

**Red flag: they are flakier than a French croissant.** Ghosting is a common occurrence these days, and I can't tell you the number of times I had a date cancel at the last minute. Unless your cat died or an unexpected meteor hit your home, your excuse sucks. Same goes for being late without giving notice — there's a special kind of embarrassment that comes with waiting at a bar alone, and everyone around thinks you've been stood up.

**Green flag: they plan to impress.** Have they been paying attention? A suitor who takes our location and interests into account when suggesting a date location gets a big tick from the get-go, whether that's a pet-nat at a nifty new wine bar or couples' pottery class, a la Ghost. They don't just

make you meet them at the same local pub they take all their crushes to, because you're very special.

**Red flag: their lack of manners makes you cringe.** This list could go on forever. They eat with their mouth open and lick their fingers with loud lip-smacks. They critique the food like they are a Michelin-star judge and pick at your steak when they claimed they were a vegan. They whip out their phone calculator to itemise the bill down to the last cent, because heaven forbid you'd split it straight down the middle. There's no better way to guarantee there will be no second date.

**Green flag: they are sweet to service staff.** You can tell a lot about a person by the way they treat a waiter or bar staff. It's not possible to be a “nice” guy or gal but turn on the sass with those you deem beneath you. Kindness goes such a long way, and initial impressions stick like superglue. Same goes for little acts of chivalry — I may be a modern woman, but I'm still partial to having a door opened for me from time to time.

## IN CONVERSATION

**Red flag: they only talk about themselves.**

Nobody wants to be on a date that is really just a monologue about how fabulous the other person is. This is not a job interview, so there's no need to feverishly argue why you're the best fit for the position. And when you “circle back” every topic to yourself, there's no space left for your potential match to shine in their own right.

**Green flag: they laugh at your**

**jokes (even if they aren't all that funny).** There's something very sexy about a generous conversationalist. They actively listen, ask engaging questions and find reasons to pepper the chat with cute compliments. Some verbal sparring and light sarcasm can be a good thing when it's for the sake of banter, but the overall energy is positive and makes you feel fab.

**Red flag: they rant about their exes.** Once I had a partner who spent the majority of our first date telling me how “crazy” their ex-girlfriends were. Turns out, they were actually the common denominator. While there may be a lot of tea to be spilt here, it can end up scalding the one telling the story. Best to let the past be in the past — there are so many more interesting topics to cover than previous romances, anyway.

**Green flag: you bond over silly things.** Sometimes the smallest details can become what leads to you falling in love — their appreciation for your crystal collection or your mutual obsession with Taylor Swift. Then there are the things that can be red flags for some and green for others, such as trashy reality TV shows or tattoos. Never underestimate just how big the little weird things are.

## WHAT WE MISS

On the hamster wheel that is dating, we can get so used to the thrill of the chase that we ignore the signs in front of us. The bad, yes, but also the good.

It can feel like we are churning through matches so fast that we become a hostage to our list of preferences, and aren't willing to look beyond that strict criteria.

Time to look a little deeper. So maybe they're not 6'5" and own a boat. But perhaps they are kind, consistent and share the same taste in memes as you do. That's even better, truly.

Happy swiping, folks.

