

The Saga guide

...to online dating



- How to get started
- Rules of the game
- Etiquette guide for dating at 50+



Welcome

You're ready to get back out there and start your search for a soulmate, but if you've been out of the dating game for a while the process can seem daunting. Don't panic – dating for the over-50s can be fun. In fact, it's likely dating will be even more enjoyable than it was when you were younger, and doing it online makes it easier than ever to meet new potential partners. These hints and tips will help you prepare for this exciting new chapter in your life.

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For lots more advice on online dating, go to saga.co.uk/dating



Why should you try online dating?

Online dating is not only becoming more and more popular with people over 50 – it's now the number-one way that people of all ages meet each other. But how do you know whether it's right for you?

Consider some of the best things about online dating: you'll meet more people than you ever expected to and it's easier to narrow the field. When you're searching through online profiles, a list of readily available information will help you to pick likely contenders.

Online dating can also be cost effective. Paying a subscription can be better value





You get the greatest reward when you're open-minded – you never know when someone might surprise you

◁ than continually going out socialising in search of a new partner – singles events and meet-up opportunities can break the bank after a while, and potentially leave you feeling disappointed.

The benefits of dating over 50

Your combined experiences will mean you'll both have plenty of stories and you'll be able to laugh about some of the mistakes you've made along the way. If you're not quite up to laughing just yet, dating will still boost your confidence immeasurably. Don't believe us? Just try it.

With fewer responsibilities and possibly a whole lot less to lose, you might find the kind of passion and zest for life you thought existed only in your dreams.

Making online dating work for you

No doubt you've heard some horror stories, but don't let that put you off – there are plenty of success stories from people who have embraced the opportunity to try something new and find love.

Your online dating success will probably be a reflection of your attitude. You get the greatest reward when you're open-minded, and when you don't discount people before trying to get to know them. You never know when someone might surprise you.

You also need to put in some effort – nobody finds their match by sitting at home doing nothing, waiting for people to contact them. So make it happen!

TOP TIP

Choosing your dating site

If you're thinking about trying online dating, check that your chosen dating service is reputable. How many users and testimonies does it have?

Is it a member of the trade body, the **Online Dating Association** (onlinedatingassociation.org.uk)?

Getting started: setting up your profile

Once you've made the decision to join the online dating game, how do you create a profile that's guaranteed to get you noticed?



Perhaps most important is your photo – profiles with photos have been shown to attract up to ten times as much attention as those without.

Choosing a profile picture

DO...

- **Choose a recent, smiley photo** that you feel confident about.
- **Find at least one picture that shows you in a moment of happiness**, unaware of the camera.
- **Include one image where you're with friends or family.**
- **Select images that show more about you than how you look** – perhaps on a trip or enjoying one of your hobbies.
- **By all means make the best of yourself** but don't create an image that isn't the 'real you'.

DON'T...

- **Upload photos from a decade ago.** If you happen to meet someone who has done so, you'll see what a shock it can be, even if the difference is subtle.
- **Be afraid to put up photos that are less than perfect** – it shows you're confident.
- **Choose shirtless or bikini shots** – it sends the wrong message.
- **Include photos of you and your ex**, even if it's the best photo of you in existence.

Describing yourself

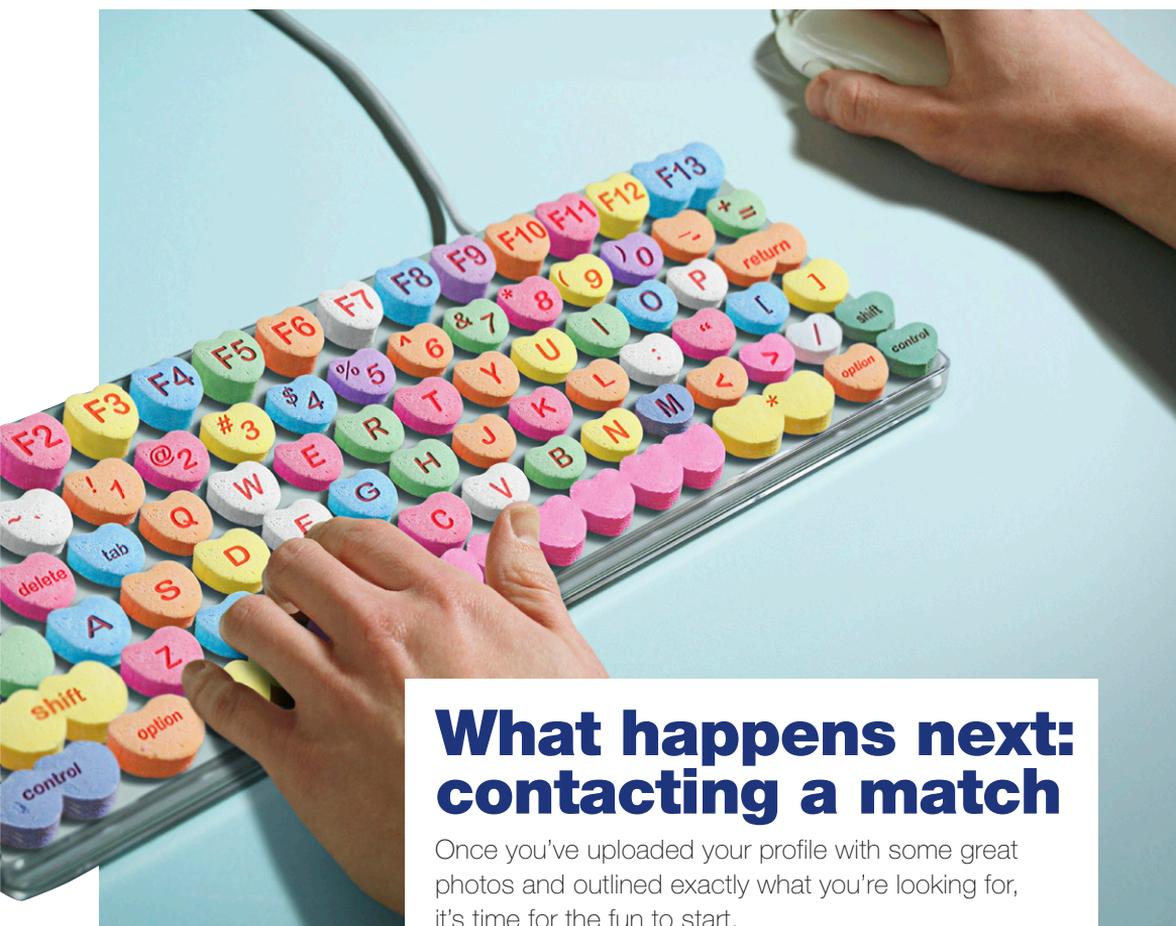
When it comes to describing yourself on your profile, it can feel alarmingly like a job interview. Don't panic! Remember that some information (your age and occupation but not your full, real name) is already displayed on the page, so you can get straight down to the business of revealing a little of who you are – perhaps through a great travel story, a fun anecdote or a description of why you love the things you do.

Most importantly, be honest. Lies will always catch up with you. List your interests and passions, and imagine someone else reading them. Does what you write make you sound like a person who'd be fun to spend some time with? If in doubt, have a trusted friend or family member read it over.

Emphasise the positive, not the negative – such as, 'I'm so lonely'. Neediness or desperation really doesn't play well!

TOP TIP

Your profile should highlight your positive attributes and make you sound like an interesting person to spend time with.



What happens next: contacting a match

Once you've uploaded your profile with some great photos and outlined exactly what you're looking for, it's time for the fun to start.

Saga Dating has a unique two-way matching process. This creates a match based on what both parties are looking for, rather than just what one person is looking for.

Unlike many dating websites, Saga's online dating service was created specifically for people over 50, so you won't have to wade through hundreds of unsuitable profiles to find your match.

In a perfect world your

profile would generate responses straightaway, but in reality things could take a while to get moving and you might find yourself wondering who should make the first move.

First, forget any outdated notions that it should be the man – it's the 21st century and with online dates, anyone can be the first to make contact. Don't be afraid to be proactive: it's empowering!



TOP TIP

If you like the look of someone, don't wait for them to make the first move. In today's dating world, there are no hard and fast rules about who should contact whom – it's time to make your own rules.

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TOP TIP

Everyone gets nervous when contacting potential matches. You are worthy of spending time with. Just be yourself and trust that everything will unfold as it's supposed to.

◁ How soon is too soon to contact a match?

With Saga Dating you can view your top 100 matches free – these are the people you're most compatible with (and vice versa). If you like the look of the person's profile, you can mark them as a favourite, and the other person will know you're a 'fan'. If you like the look of someone, seize the initiative and send them a message...

When you email, pick something they've mentioned in their profile and ask a question about it. This makes it easy for them to respond, and lets them know that you've taken the time to read their profile.

Dating correspondence

It's important not to divulge too much personal information when chatting to potential matches. Initial

TOP TIP

If someone uses too many cheesy pick-up lines, they're probably just nervous. Or they might actually BE cheesy. The rule is, don't be put off straightaway – see what happens before making your mind up.

communication should focus on how easily conversation flows – not finding out their political or religious views or financial situation. If things go well, all will be revealed in time.

Similarly, being overtly flirtatious is inappropriate for your very first conversation, but if you hit it off and things are going well, don't feel like you have to hold back. And

should you feel your initial flirtation isn't reciprocated, stop – no one likes to feel pressured or harassed.

Keep all of your initial communications light and fun. Dating is supposed to be enjoyable, not daunting!



For more on finding love in later life, go to saga.co.uk/dating



My match disappeared. Why?

Things seemed like they were all on track – maybe even leading up to a date – but with no explanation your current interest seems to have fallen off the face of the

earth. This happens frequently to people of all ages in the world of online dating and there can be all kinds of personal reasons why.

When someone you like simply

disappears it can be disappointing, but don't take it personally – most probably it was nothing you did. Just put it behind you, and focus on new conversations.



The first date

The first date can be a nerve-racking experience, especially if you're a little out of practice. You're standing on the precipice of a new beginning and chances are you're not the only one feeling a little edgy.

It will help to calm first-date butterflies if you're well-prepared. Do you know the location and how you're going to get there? Have you chosen your outfit and worked out how much time you need to get ready? The more confident you are about

yourself and your surroundings, the more successful the date is likely to be as your natural magnetism and zest for life will shine through.

Choosing the best location

Should you choose somewhere fun and adventurous? Perhaps somewhere cosy that oozes romance? Should you splurge on somewhere impressive or keep things simple? Here are some top tips for choosing the best first-date location.

Choose somewhere that inspires conversation

Going to a museum or wine tasting can help things go smoothly. If you're eating out, pick somewhere you can indulge in some people-watching.

Find somewhere that suits your mutual interests

After exchanging a few emails you probably know some mutual likes and dislikes, so pick an experience that you know you'll both enjoy, based on a shared hobby or a love of Thai food, for example. ▶



TOP TIP

Flowers and chocolates?

Romance is good, but don't overdo it - it can make things very awkward if you don't hit it off. Sometimes keeping it simple is better, so leave the roses and chocolates at home for the first date.

◀ **Make sure it's easy to find and within a reasonable distance**

No one wants to turn up late and flustered for a date, so make sure the location is easy for both of you to get to.

Be spontaneous

If a suitable location doesn't immediately spring to mind, you could just meet in a public place, such as a park, and take it from there. Walk, talk and enjoy each other's company.

What to wear

It goes without saying that you shouldn't wear your fanciest dress or tux if you're meeting for coffee, but it helps to dress appropriately for the occasion, whatever it might be. This will keep things comfortable on all accounts. Dressing to impress means wearing something you feel good in, which will boost your natural confidence.

Ensure you're well-presented

You'll make a much better impression with just a little preparation. Get the iron out the night before and make sure every item is stain free. And gosh, do brush your teeth!

Wear what makes you feel comfortable

You will feel more confident and will carry yourself better.

Go easy on perfume and cologne

A nice smell can leave a great first impression, but bear in mind that too much of any scent is off-putting.

Conversation tips

Here are some pointers that should get the conversation going on the first date. Remember, try not to get too carried away and share absolutely everything about yourself. It's always better to leave your date wanting to see you again and find out more about you.

Share your passions

There's nothing more attractive than a person with real interests in things. It makes your eyes sparkle and makes you more exciting to talk to, so share your passions with your date and you might find some common ground. But do remember to ask him or her about themselves too!

Drop the baggage

You have probably accumulated some baggage over the years, but there is a time and a place to discuss it. Don't dismiss it if an awkward question comes up, but try to stick to the highlights of your life. ▷

TOP TIP

Always agree to meet in a well-lit, public place. And don't wait too long to meet them, or you might find yourself disappointed. If you can, it's a good idea to suggest a Skype or webcam session first so you know the person you're talking to is genuine.

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TOP TIP

Keep first-date conversations light and breezy. Save the heavy issues and confessions for later. With time comes intimacy.

◁ Don't be afraid to dream

Believe it or not, most people enjoy talking about themselves, so ask about your date's hopes and dreams for the future and don't be afraid to share yours.

Ask for advice

Everyone loves to feel needed, so ask your date for help with something simple. Perhaps you're looking for a good yoga class or are interested in learning a new skill. Make your date feel a part of something in your life and watch the ice break in no time.

What not to say

When you're dating in your fifties and beyond, you've seen and done enough to ensure you have plenty of stories to share. But keep things light-hearted. Don't ask questions about exes – people leave relationships for all kinds of reasons. Don't ask about money, or who's inheriting what, or how much your date earns. Ask about travel plans and goals instead. The deeply personal information comes later.

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Making a good first impression

Lean forwards in your chair and make eye contact so your date knows you are interested.

Participate in the conversation – ask lots of questions and share your views, don't leave all the talking to your date.

Leave your phone in your pocket – you should be paying attention only to your date.

Don't overdo the alcohol. You might be nervous, but drinking a bit too much could cause more trouble than you anticipated.

Make sure your clothes are clean and presentable

Try not to look terribly nervous, even if you are. Remember that your date is probably trying just as hard to conceal their nerves as you are.



TOP TIPS

Make sure you agree on a convenient, comfortable location that will help to boost your self-confidence.

Choose what you want to wear in advance and leave yourself enough time to get ready and reach your destination stress-free.

What happens next

How long should you wait before contacting your date again?



The truth is, there are no rules other than the ones we make ourselves – life is too short to play games. Maybe email the next day with a brief thank you, but wait to see if you get a positive response before suggesting another date.

If you haven't arranged another date within a few days, get back online and meet someone else. There's no need to wait.

Setting up a second date

There's nothing more flattering than someone who takes the initiative and suggests a second date. If date one left a little tingle in your toes and you can't wipe that smile off your face, get on the phone and arrange round two. After all, what have you got to lose?

Letting someone down

If you don't want to pursue anything romantic with someone, don't make ambiguous statements or promises you don't intend to keep. Be firm and clear, but always kind. Sending mixed messages to someone who's interested in you isn't fair, especially when you know they like you more than you like them.

Keep it simple

Try not to send any long-winded excuses about why you can't meet up, or continue your relationship. Doing so invites a response and could mean you both end up caught in an emotionally draining conversation.

Think of rejection like pulling off a plaster; do it quickly and it's less painful.

Avoid confrontation

Everyone deals with rejection differently and some people can be more sensitive than others – particularly after divorce or widowhood. They might push you for details of why you're no longer interested in them, but don't get dragged into a discussion or confrontation. Always be conscious of the other person's feelings, but you need to stay firm.

It's never easy ending any kind of relationship, no matter how brief it's been. But you owe it to both of you to be honest and to cut the ties so that you both can get on with the search for your perfect match.

If things don't work out

It can be disappointing when a date or a budding relationship doesn't work out. Sometimes it can feel like you're on a bit of an emotional roller-coaster – but don't despair, we've all been there at some point in our lives! The important thing is to pick yourself up, see if there's anything to be



◁ learnt from the experience, and then just get back out there. As Scarlett O’Hara said: ‘After all, tomorrow is another day’.

Don’t take it personally

Sometimes, if the other person has ended things without telling you why, it can be tempting to go back over in your mind as to what went wrong, spend time looking for answers and end up blaming yourself.

Stop! There are many reasons as to why a relationship doesn’t work out. Sometimes when it comes to the crunch, people find that they’re not actually as ready for a relationship as they originally thought. Either way, keep your head and your hopes up. The right person for you is out there somewhere!

Try something different

Chances are you’ve probably got a well-established social circle that you enjoy spending time with. In the heady excitement of online dating, don’t forget your old friends or pass up the opportunity to live up your everyday routine: try volunteering for a local charity or even booking a holiday – something that will give you a new perspective and even a new zest for life, which will then be reflected in your confidence and the way in which you present yourself.

TOP TIP

If you do find love, it won’t be anything like your old ones. Love will be different at 60 from how it was at 30 – it might even be better! Be prepared to have fun and regain your zest for life with someone new. Who knows what doors will open?

Stay safe

Unfortunately, there are unscrupulous people out there who specifically target older people (they look for mentions of widowed, divorced, etc). If you’ve been out of the dating game for a while, some of the below tips might not seem obvious to you. Therefore – without wishing to scare the life out of you – I think it would be provident to mention the following, which are taken from the Online Dating Association (ODA) website.

The ODA, member companies, the police and online protection agencies share the following advice about scammers:

Never ever respond to a request for money

Never give out bank account or personal details.

Beware of a sob story or fantastic too-good-to-be-true business deals.

Watch out for profiles that immediately tug on heart strings such as ill relatives or those requiring money urgently.

Don’t allow the passing of time and some sense of closeness to someone online cloud your better judgment. These sorts of pitches may take some considerable time to come out in messages. That does not make them any less of a lie.

Be wary of forming any long-distance and overseas relationships.

Be wary of profiles from foreign countries.

Be careful about the images you share. Never share anything you wouldn’t mind your family or others seeing.

Don’t ever feel silly or scared if you think that there is a problem. Your welfare and that of others comes first.

Always ask a friend for their opinion – if they advise you against the relationship, you should listen to them.

Report anyone who is acting suspiciously to the dating site that you are using. ▷

Meeting in-person

Be smart and stay safe.

Going on a date with someone is new and exciting.

Although you've probably got to know the person better during your conversations, it's still worth taking note of the following tips to ensure you stay safe when dating, especially on a first date:

- **Let friends or family members know where you're going and when you'll be home and keep them regularly updated.**
- **Meet in a public place where there will be lots of people around. Don't be tempted to meet at your date's house.**
- **Use your own transportation to get to and from the date.**
- **Watch your alcohol intake and don't leave your drink unattended.**
- **Keep your purse, wallet, phone, and personal items with you.**
- **Take your mobile phone with you.**
- **Leave at any time if you feel uncomfortable. Remember, your safety comes first.**

TOP TIP
Making room in your life for a new partner can be a big adjustment, no matter how many sparks are flying. When welcoming someone new into your life, the key is to keep an open mind and an open heart.



How do you know if someone likes you?

It can be hard to tell whether someone sees you as a potential love interest or whether they're just being polite and friendly. Not every online dating match will turn out to be a long-term partner.

Everyone is different, but there are a few tell-tale signs body language experts have identified that could help you read between the lines.

If a woman likes a man she will...

Fiddle with her sleeves and start to lean towards you when she speaks. She might even twist her jewellery and flick her hair. Look out for that wine glass – is she twiddling it round on the table? If so, it's a good sign!

She may also push items such as the menu towards you, which might look like she is pushing you away but she is actually trying to close the distance between you to create an open invitation for you to do the same.

If a man likes a woman he will...

Likely raise his eyebrows when he's looking at you. He might start to 'peacock' – watch out for that slightly puffed chest! He'll also look you in the eyes a lot, and you may find him leaning in towards you in an attempt to draw you closer. Watch out for dilated pupils and slightly parted lips, too.

Dating and sex

It's one thing having a flirty chat online with a potential new partner, but what happens when you meet up?



You may well establish early on that you fancy each other, but does that mean you have to jump into bed together at the end of the first date? Here are a few pointers to help guide you through this exciting but uncharted period, when you want to move the relationship on.

Don't have sex until you're ready

You're at the stage in life where you are more sure about yourself in many areas of your life, so why feel you have to compromise yourself and have sex with someone before you're ready? Having shelved the insecurities of your 20-something self, make sure the choices you're making are right for you.

If 'ready' for you and your date is on the first night, then fine. But taking time to get to know each other is of course normally a far better way. Emotional intimacy is

essential for a healthy sex life.

Tune in to the messages each of you are giving out on that first date. If someone is insensitive to the attitudes you hold, they're not the right person for you. Clearly, if they seem to be pushing for sex in a way that you find uncomfortable, make your excuses, leave – and strike them off your list.

Stay well

It may be rare, but women over 50 who haven't yet been through the menopause can get pregnant. Be prepared to talk about contraception with your new

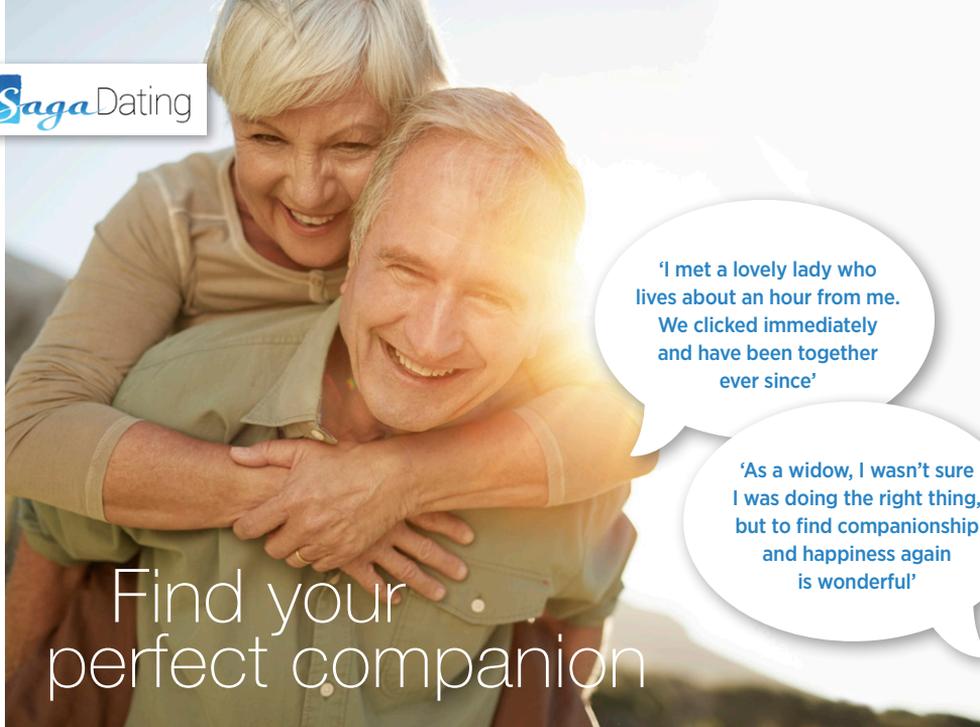
partner before you have sex. And even if you are through the menopause you need contraception to safeguard against sexually transmitted diseases, which have reached record levels in the over-50s, soaring 38% in the past three years among the 50 to 70 age group.

Relax and have fun!

Some people are so anxious about showing their naked body to someone who doesn't know how stunning they looked in their twenties, it puts them off the dating game altogether. Try not to worry and remember; your date will be equally concerned. Humour can be a great icebreaker and a glass or two of a favourite tippie will help to break down any inhibitions.



Saga Dating



Find your
perfect companion

'I met a lovely lady who lives about an hour from me. We clicked immediately and have been together ever since'

'As a widow, I wasn't sure I was doing the right thing, but to find companionship and happiness again is wonderful'

Saga Dating has more than 150,000 members to choose from, and hundreds of new members are joining every week. Meeting someone local has never been easier and, as you would expect from a Saga brand, we specialise in matching people over 50.

You can set up a free profile in less than five minutes. All you need to do is tell us a little bit about yourself and the kind of person you'd like to meet, add a photo to your profile, and our matching system will do the

rest. It's that simple. Within minutes, you'll be able to find out who your most compatible matches are.

You can remain a free member of the site for as long as you wish. However, access to all of

the site's benefits requires a subscription. (Costs start from as little as 35p per day based on a 12-month subscription package).

We've got a great customer service team who will happily help you if you get stuck or have any questions. And last but not least, we're members of the Online Dating Association.

Don't put it off! Sign up free at sagadating.co.uk



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