

eliminating racism empowering women

ywca

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ywca week without violence cyber dating tips

So you have been thinking about using the Internet to meet someone special? Perhaps you're feeling a little leery? Practically all of us know people who actually have met their life partners that way. But how do you know if you're dealing with someone who is on the up and up or someone who is being deceptive?

First of all, these tips are for adults. It really is not a good idea for anyone under 18 to cyber date, because there are people who prey on young people.

Of course, being an adult doesn't shield you from predators either, so take precautions!

- 1) Treat them as strangers, even if they are cute!
- 2) Don't share personal information that would let someone find you offline. You advised your children not to disclose their identities online, so take your own advice.
- 3) Select an online dating service that uses a device to disguise your real e-mail or set up a Hotmail or other free account just for this purpose. Also, make sure the online dating service is reputable.
- 4) Take time to get to know the person online before you meet. Don't be in a hurry, and don't let anyone rush you.
- 5) After you have gotten to know each other online, take the relationship to the next level – the telephone – before you meet in person. The safest way to do this is to use a public phone. Once you are comfortable enough, you can share real phone numbers.
- 6) It's a good idea to have caller ID. If the relationship does not work out, you can use the service to block calls.

- 7) Talk to your closest friends about the person you have been e-mailing. Love may be blind, but your friends are not. They can be objective.
- 8) Tell a friend where and when you are going to meet your date and what time you expect to return home.
- 9) Use your own car, even if the date suggests that you go to a restaurant or a movie after you have met for coffee.
- 10) When you meet your date, select a public place where you can take time to observe body language, dress, personal hygiene, tone of voice, etc. Compare what the person told you to what you see and hear. Does the information match up?
- 11) Keep in mind that women tend to lie about their weight or age, and men tend to lie about their income, their fitness and their hair (or lack thereof). If your date sent you a photo, recognize that it might be several years old, enhanced with PhotoShop, or it might be someone else's picture altogether.
- 12) Remember, honesty is always the best policy, a guide for both of you to practice.
- 13) Keep in mind that you have spent hours getting to know one another online. The familiarity might have you throwing caution to the wind, because you believe you know this person. The truth is: You don't know whether your date has been honest.

Anyone who cares about you will respect you for being careful. Safe cyber dating is like safe sex; it's the smart thing to do. And if the date doesn't work out, there will be others.

*** THE YWCA IS NOT PROMOTING OR ENDORSING CYBER DATING.**

*** The YWCA USA thanks WiredSafety and its executive director, Parry Aftab, for their expertise on this matter. WiredSafety provides free one-to-one help for women who are cyber stalked or hurt by cyber dating gone wrong from its website, www.wiredsafety.org.**