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Dealing with Dating in the Age of Tinder

The dating landscape has forever changed from the formal courting process where a boy went over to meet a girl's parents before even taking her on a date, to the independence and freedom of online and mobile dating. Some claim these mobile dating apps have created the downfall of dating, while others laud them as ushering in great opportunity and empowerment for individuals.

The once small arena of online dating with Plentyoffish.com, Match.com and eHarmony.com (which all have mobile companion apps now) has lead to a breadth of dating apps including Tinder, Happn, Hinge, OkCupid, Blendr, Bumble and many more. Each has it's own gimmick making it marginally different from the rest.

Tinder, the largest mobile dating app, allows you to swipe right to indicate you like a person based off of their picture and short bio or swipe left to indicate you're not a match. If you're a match then you're allowed to send a message. Hinge allows for a little less randomness in that it pulls from friends of friends on Facebook to create matches for you. Bumble the newest app of the bunch vows to empower women, by allowing only them to send the first message.

Each app has its pros and cons, but what links them all is that they allow for instant connection. One person is immediately connected to another once they "match" and from there the users choose whether to send a message or not. It's a simple concept and makes sense in our electronic age since people want to be connected immediately, but how is that impacting the dating process?

Many critics believe that this immediacy lends itself to a culture of hooking up and one-night stands instead of conversation, dates, and loving relationships. This is the story that gets published about these apps most often, because it paints a vivid picture, even though it's not necessarily the case.

These anecdotal stories share the experiences of some members who receive unsolicited pictures and unwanted advances from anonymous fellow users. On the other hand there are many users who tell stories (often far less publically) of meeting their life. There are millions of users on these apps, Tinder alone claims to have 50 million active users and has been downloaded 100 million times. All kind of members sign in for all kinds of different reasons.

The issue is not necessarily the apps themselves as they are only a platform to meet people. Unfortunately they have gained quite a reputation for being vulgar and scary places where you will meet people only looking for sex, when clearly that's not always the case.

So, the question becomes: "How can I use these apps in a way that's helpful to my dating life?" Here are some simple Do's and Don'ts for mobile dating apps.

- Don't give too much information before meeting someone.
    - Tinder helps make introductions but it doesn't need to be the place where you tell someone your life story and address. Save that for first date…or perhaps the third.
- Do go into it with an open mind.
    - As mentioned, there may be some oddballs in the Tinder users you're swiping through, but there are some good ones too. Allow yourself the opportunity to meet someone.
- Don't swipe too quickly.
    - Pay attention to what you're doing. If you're mindlessly swiping through you may miss someone special or swipe right a few more times than you meant.

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- Do send messages as if you will meet this person in real life.
    - Usually the goal is to meet these people in person so treat them as if that's the case. Don't be rude or vulgar.
- Don't go on too many dates per week.
    - With so many people to interact with it can be easy to set up numerous dates in a short time and overextend yourself. It's good to go out and meet different people, but pace yourself.
- Do be upfront and honest about what you want.
    - Be honest about your intentions. If you're looking for a relationship, say it! If you're looking to go on a date and see what evolves, say that! Don't lead someone on if you're not looking for the same thing.
- Don't try too hard.
    - You're profile picture doesn't need to be perfect and airbrushed. Your profile shouldn't include what you think people will like. Be yourself, especially if that means a goofy picture and profile.