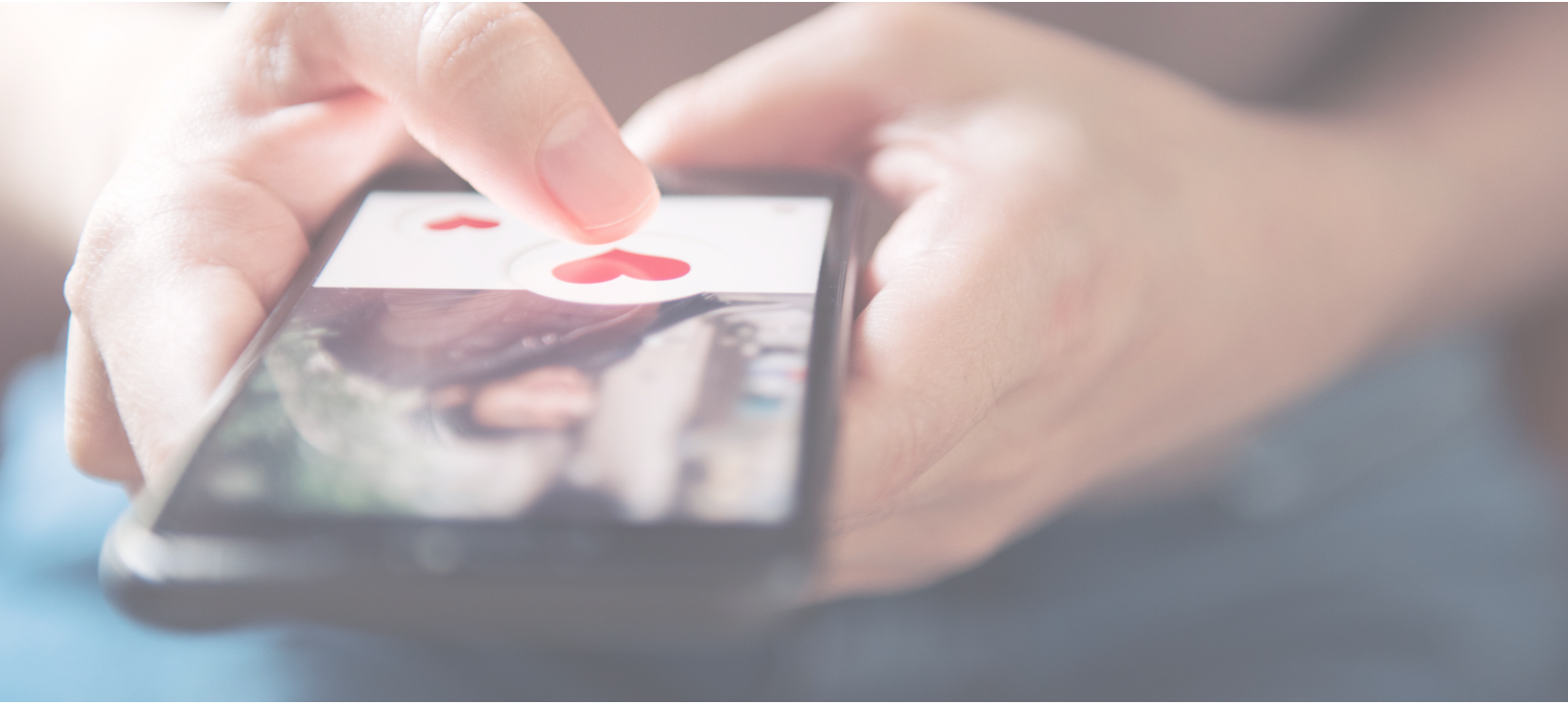# SMART DIGITAL DATING GUIDE

The SGS Smart Digital Dating Guide is a tool to encourage you to educate yourself on digital relationships to Protect and Empower safe online dating habits. This planning tool does not guarantee online safety and is provided as a courtesy of Smart Gen Society. SGS is not legally responsible for your digital dating or safety.

ABOUT SGS

Smart Gen Society (SGS) is an Omaha-based non-profit, empowering smart choices in today's digital world. Our expert staff and trained facilitators seek to protect and empower the community to use online resources safely, while maintaining their privacy, and staying true to their personal brand.

Our goal is to reduce digital-based anxiety, prevent peer and predator exploitation, and ensure our communities remain safe.

ONLINE DATING

Online dating isn't a stigma anymore. In fact now it is one of the primary ways singles feel comfortable connecting in the digital age. With this being a new norm in society SGS encourages user's of these dating platforms to be educated on how to remain safe and on brand. We recommend learning all the facts before diving head first into a world of swiping left or right.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ONLINE DATING

Online dating is a system that enables people to find and introduce themselves to new personal connections over the Internet, usually with the goal of developing personal, romantic, or sexual relationships. Individuals entering the world of dating online need to be **18 years and older**.

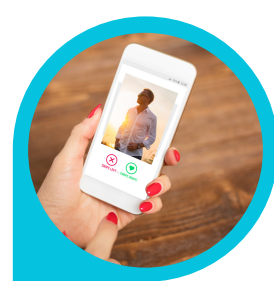T**here are a number advantages and disadvantages when it comes to finding a partner online.**

ADVANTAGES

- **Access to more people and more types of people.** Helps introduce you to people who you may otherwise not meet outside of your social circle.
- **You know where people stand.** People who you see on dating services are more likely than not single. Often most profiles state what the person is seeking.
- **Breaking free from traditional gender roles.** Due to the anonymity of online dating sites it allows anyone take charge and start the conversation. As well as empowering people to move away from the passive role.
- **Beneficial for people who may be shy and closed off.** The online world allows people to get comfortable with the person they are talking to before being launched into a social setting with them that would normally provoke feelings of anxiety or stress.
- **Numerous methods of communication available.** Through online dating platforms you can direct message, talk using audio or go face to face with video chat features.

DISADVANTAGES

- **Too many options can be a negative thing.** If you thought you were indecisive before try having hundred of people at your fingertips. With so many options it is easy to get overwhelmed or stressed.
- **Profiles provide a limit amount of information**. Online profiles give users the opportunity to create a highlight reel of their lives. This allows the user to pick and choose what they want others to see.
- **Concentration on physical attraction.** A variety of dating platforms specifically apps promote appearance as the main factor of selection.
- **A rush for romantic chemistry.** When matching with potential partners online there can be a hurry to develop romantic feelings rather than allowing them to develop naturally over time.
- **It can be a crutch.** It can be more comfortable for user's to use the internet as a crutch to make dating easier. However this can hinder your ability to meet and interact in person.

ONLINE DATING PLATFORMS

As technology has evolved in the last decade thousands of dating websites began to pop up online followed by the creation of numerous popular dating apps. With so many choices finding which one fits your needs and what you're looking for is part of the process. Another essential step is to understand which selection makes you feel safer and more comfortable.

APPS

TINDER
AGES 18-29

Tinder is a geosocial networking and online dating application that allows users to anonymously swipe to like or dislike other profiles based on their photos, a small bio, and common interests. Once two users have "matched, " they can exchange messages. Tinder is known for it's **"hook-up"** culture.

BUMBLE
AGES 25-34

Bumble is a location-based social application that facilitates communication between interested users. Bumble is open to any sexuality but is primarily for heterosexuals' relationships. In heterosexual matches, **only female users can make the first contact** with matched male users, while in same-sex matches either person can send a message first.

GRINDR
AGES 18-24

Grindr is the largest geosocial networking and online dating application geared towards gay, bi and trans men. When you've created an account, you can add one photo and a small bio about yourself – though this is typically saved for sexual preferences rather than information on your hobbies or your interests. Grindr is often used for "hook-ups" rather than dating.

WEBSITES

MATCH
AGES 35-44

Match.com is considered the happy medium between "hook-ups" and forming relationships, this creates an environment that will cater to whatever you are seeking. Having been around for over 25 years, Match has evolved to suit the needs of each generation that logs onto the site.

EHARMONY
AGES 25-34

eHarmony is a dating site that aims to help its users find a serious match that is best for them. Using compatibility matching system, the dating site can narrow down each person's match to a fewer list of possible matches. The site aims to find love and long-lasting relationships for it's members worldwide.

CHRISTIAN MINGLE
AGES 35-44

Christian Mingle is an online dating service that suited to Christian singles seeking fulfilling relationships rooted in faith. This dating site now accepts people of any sexuality or gender identity. Although most members are heterosexual. Once each profile is created Christian Mingle approves each one to guarantee safety and authenticity for it's users.

HOOP
AGES 13-17

Hoop is the latest app designed to target the younger generation and help them "score" in dating department. With no age selection function users are exposed to people of all ages.Known as the app to trade nude pictures on. This app includes the signature dating swipe left or right. However, swiping right connects individuals through Snapchat providing your username to the stranger you've matched with. Depending on the settings set on your Snapchat this also gives matches access to your location.

PLENTY OF FISH
AGES 18-29

Based off the expression there are other fish in the sea, Plenty of Fish is a dating app and website created to give user's the opportunity to match and communicate for free. It is designed more like a dating site with the ability to search for specific people you may know using the platform. Plenty of Fish is the dating app for singles who don't want to break their wallets to make a connection.

HINGE
AGES 25-34

Hinge is the dating app **"designed to be deleted."** Unlike a variety of it's competitors, Hinge is geared towards finding a relationship hence being known as the dating app for people who want to get of dating apps. This platform allows free users to only like up to ten profiles a day and gives the ability to pre-screen your matches for whatever preferences you have in mind.

OKCUPID
AGES 25-40

OkCupid is an American-based, internationally operating online dating, friendship, and social networking website that features multiple-choice questions in order to match members. It is supported by advertisements, by paying users who do not see ads, and by selling user data for data mining.

We understand there are potentially thousands of dating platforms available for singles on any device. We have chosen to review the more commonly used programs. However all of the information presented in this guide is valuable to any online dating software. We ask that you proceed with caution and act in your best interest as you engage with others online and in person.

TIPS FOR CONNECTING ONLINE

When making a meaningful connection with someone it is important to put your best foot forward and remain on brand. However, connecting with others online can be scary so to keep yourself and your information protected there are a few precautions you can take to ensure your safety.

- **Use different photos on your dating profile.** If you use photos that appear elsewhere on the web such as various social media accounts it can be easy for users to reverse image search your photos. This is a gives direct access to your personal information. By using original photos on your dating profile you prevent others from being able to research you.
- **Take steps to make safe usernames.** It is time to move away from usernames being your first and last name. This gives anyone access to your biggest identifier, your name. Usernames should also be different for each account you create online to prevent people from locating you on multiple platforms.
- **Keep an eye out for fake or suspicious profiles.** Typically the less information shown on a dating profile the less likely someone is to be real. Beware of users who only have one photo or any photos that appear to be fake. Stay cautious of users who don't take the time to add information to their bios. The more you know about someone the better.
- **Don't be afraid to block and report.** Tools such as blocking and reporting are put in place to protect you and other users online. You don't have to match with users for these functions to take effect. If someone's profile seems suspicious or someone acts inappropriately towards you trust your instincts and put a barrier between the two of you.
- **Wait to share personal information.** Your personal information should be treated like a house key. It should not be given out to strangers. Information including full names, birthday, phone numbers and usernames for social media sites should only be given out to people you know are authentic and are comfortable with. Information such as credit card numbers, bank account numbers, passwords, addresses and social security numbers should never be given out to anyone.
- **Stay away from financial offers.** Never respond to a request about giving or receiving money from anyone online. These offers are a scam with the intention of stealing from you. Often these offers won't occur right away but will occur when an individual forms a trust or bond with you. If you are sent a request report and block the individual immediately.
- **Look into the person you are talking to on social media.** This step can help assure you that the person you are talking to is real. It can also give you information about who this person is and if their lifestyle matches your own. Keep in mind if you can find them they can find you. Be sure to adjust your privacy settings to only share details you are comfortable with.

TIPS FOR
MEETING IN PERSON

With the sigma of online dating being a thing of the past stranger danger has gone out the door with it. Meeting up with someone from online in real life can go wonderfully or it can go terribly wrong. The unknown can be scary so keep in mind some tips for staying as safe as possible when moving your online relationship to face to face.

- **Video chat before in person contact is made.** This is the best way to verify the identity of the person you are intending to meet up with. It can also get you comfortable with transitioning from talking online to speaking in person. If the person refuses to do a video call that can be seen as a warning sign that they may not be who they claim to be. Excuses such as "My video camera doesn't work," or "I don't have a video chat feature," are often not true.
- **Share where you are going and who you are meeting with a friend.** Screenshot your dates profile and grant your friend access to your location can help protect you in the long run. Check in with your friend throughout the evening, if they don't hear from you create a back up plan on what should be done next to ensure your safety.
- **Meet in a public place.** Avoid meeting up with people in unfamiliar environments such as a home, apartment or workplace. Isolated locations like parks and other secluded places should also should be held off until after the first date. Choose a spot that has lots of people around, this could include a restaurant, bar or coffee shop. Selecting a place within your own turf can help you feel more comfortable and know your way around.
- **Use your own transportation.** Don't rely on your date to transport you to and from. This will prevent your date from learning your address as well as allows you to remain in control of when you can leave. Even if the person offers to give you a ride don't get into a vehicle with someone you don't know and trust.
- **Seek help of a staff member if need be**. If at any point you need to leave the situation you can use certain code words to alert others you may be in an uncomfortable situation. For example, ordering an angel shot at a bar, telling a bartender you want to speak to Angela or writing a note on for staff on a napkin or check shows people around you that you need help.
- **Drink with caution.** Having a couple of drinks or a smoke on a date is completely alright. However, know your limit and do not feel pressured to check if your date is. Alcohol and drugs can alter your reality and make it easier for people to take advantage of you. Whatever you put into your body make sure you are the only one who has come in contact with it to avoid common date rape drugs that will hinder your ability to consent or think for yourself.

IS ONLINE DATING RIGHT FOR YOU?

Although online dating seems to be the easier option to finding a partner nowadays, it is not for everyone. Consider the following statements when determining whether or not the responsibility of dating digitally is right for you.

_____ **I am 18-years-old or older.**

_____ **I will post information or pictures that can only be found on my dating profile and not on other social media platforms.**

_____ **I will tell someone where I am going and who I am going with to protect myself in case something goes wrong.**

_____ **I will use the block and report function if I am feeling unsafe or uncomfortable about someone I am interacting with online.**

_____ **I will limit the amount of personal information I give out until I am comfortable with the individual I am going with and I know they are who they say they are.**

_____ **I will stay away from financial offers I receive online.**

_____ **I will use my own transportation when commuting from date to date to remain in control of my ability to leave if need be.**

_____ **I will meet the potential partner in a public setting filled with people, where I am comfortable and familiar with the surroundings.**

_____ **I will contact someone while on the date if I feel I am in an uncomfortable or possibly dangerous situation that I need to get out of.**

_____ **I will attempt to video chat the person I intend to meet before I meet them to verify their identity.**

_____ **I will watch my drink carefully to prevent myself from consuming something that could harm me.**

_____ **I will not depend on dating platforms for my happiness.**