

feature

How to Play Cupid

Tips for matchmakers.

Lambeth Hochwald



Some people were born to play Cupid. Adrienne Arieff, 30, a San Francisco-based public relations director, has been setting up people since high school. Arieff, who met her fiancé through a setup, swears by the low-key approach of inviting two people she thinks would hit it off to group events. "At my birthday party this year, I invited two friends who are both sporty, insanely good-looking and 'players,'" she says. "Within seconds of being in the same room, they were talking. Now, three months later, they're **totally in love.**" Would you, too, love to find your friends matches made in heaven? Before you pick up your love-dipped bow and arrow, consult our successful matchmaker do's and don'ts.

Matchmaker Do's

DO look for a good fit. Bring together people who have things in common — the fact that two people are single is not a good enough reason to set them up! Look to connect individuals with compatible personalities (for example, a go-getter might not be right for a couch potato), similar values (they're both very family-oriented, say), and who are both available and ready to meet someone (make sure they're not entangled with an ex). "Really good matchmakers know to look for two people with similar lifestyles, education and age," says Nina Atwood, a psychotherapist and author of "**Be Your Own Dating Service.**" "You also want them to be at the same place. If one person is more emotionally available than the other, it's going to be a bad match."

DO go with your gut. If you have a strong sense that two friends are going to get along, arrange for phone numbers to be swapped, says Sarah Norton, a professional matchmaker in Dallas who has been in the love-connection business for more than a decade. "If you have a gut feeling your friend is really good for another friend, there's probably something to it, especially if you know both people well," she says.

DO consider appearances. It's naive to think that looks don't matter. A good match usually involves two people who are equally attractive or even have similar physical attributes. "I have this funny theory that people who belong together look alike," says Myreah Moore, a dating coach and author of "**Date Like a Man to Get the Man You Want.**" "Many couples almost look like brother and sister, or at least share some similar features. I don't think that's a coincidence." There's no rule that says an individual can't be attracted to someone who looks markedly different than himself or herself, but large disparities in weight, athleticism and even personal style can make the already difficult business of connecting with a complete stranger even harder.

DO share your insights. Give both of the people you're setting up enough details about the other person so they're not completely lost when they actually meet. Paint a basic picture of each person, recommends Norton, including where he or she grew up and what his or her favorite pastime is. "The more information you share with your people, the more they'll have to talk about," says the professional matchmaker. "Sharing some salient details takes away some of the anxiety of not knowing what to expect; it can help the date go better."

Matchmaker Don'ts

DON'T give the hard sell. If you don't want to set your friends — and yourself — up for disappointment, avoid overselling prospective matches. "You have to walk a fine line," says Lisa Ronis, a professional matchmaker in New York City. "You should tell someone enough about the person you're setting them up with so that they are excited and want to meet them, but you shouldn't talk [him or her] up so much that any mere mortal would be a letdown. Try not to say things like 'She's been described as spectacular-looking' or 'He's the funniest man alive.'" Make sure you're not overstating someone's qualities, even if he or she is a person whom you adore.

DON'T place them in the spotlight. Some people may feel more comfortable being set up in a group situation such as a dinner party or a bar outing, but in order for a match to stand a chance, it's essential that the two people have an opportunity to talk to each other face-to-face. "It's weird when everyone in a group knows two people are on a blind date," says Ronis. "You don't want the people to feel as if they're being watched." To help the potential partners feel more at ease, introduce them and let the evening take its course without too much intervention on your part. Try to

give them opportunities to be alone for a while, whether it's asking them to go make coffee or steering the crowd away from them.

DON'T push for a second date. After the first date has gone down, let nature take its course. "Most people know on the first date whether they're interested in seeing a person again," says Slotnick. "The very worst thing you can do as a matchmaker is push two people to go out again if the first date was lousy." Nagging two people to go out a second time if they made only a lukewarm love connection the first time is a surefire way to make them feel bad about their prospects — and resentful of you.

DON'T get too involved. Always remember that despite your best intentions, the two people you set up might not hit it off. Don't invest so much in the match that you'll be devastated if it doesn't pan out. Once you've given both parties phone numbers or e-mail addresses and a brief-but-informative description, back off. "The most successful matchmaker makes the match and then stays out of the way of the natural process of two people getting to know each other," says Slotnick. "The last thing you want to do is get sucked into a he said/she said kind of thing." After all, you don't want other people's love lives to take over your *own* life.

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