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Gay Dating on the Internet: Queers in Cyberspace

Jul 20, 2010 [William Doherty](#)

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Seeking a gay mate on the Internet has benefits and pitfalls: online dating offers gay guys a virtual connection that may extend to the physical realm.

Internet services targeted to gay men have multiplied rapidly, making it possible to chat in real time, place and respond to personal ads, and even cruise other guys in the proximity of a mobile phone.

Gay Dating History

In days of yore, gay folk found themselves relegated to the edges of society, gathering in tight-knit secret cells of friends or in such places as public restrooms and seedy bars sometimes raided by corrupt police.

Times changed with the liberation movements during the last half of the 20th century and, along with other groups, gay people gained certain civil rights, such as the right to gather peaceably and cruise in public, meeting face-to-face in the streets, in the bars and bathhouses, and in various social and political organizations.

Then, at about the same time as the AIDS crisis reached its nadir, gay guys discovered how to date via the Internet.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Meeting Gay Partners Online

Since many gay people have access to computers, the Internet allows guys to meet each other in the comfort and privacy of their own homes. A gay man no longer has to brave the smokers and drunks in the bar. He can reveal as much or as little as he wants about himself, with or without a current picture, for example.

However, profiles of gay men tend toward exaggeration, especially in regard to certain physical attributes. Without seeing someone in person, it's more difficult to assess their appearance and one loses the intelligence gained from body language.

Where Gay Men Can Find Dates Online

Initially, online services like Gay.com offered the ability to post a personal ad, search through other ads, and chat online. Along with Gay.com, Gaydar.co.uk developed a strong international following. More recently, sites like Manhunt.net offered the ability to track who viewed one's profile.

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Certain sites developed around gay subcultures and fetishes, such as Recon.com, Daddyhunt.com, and SilverDaddies.com. Some sites are racier than others, such as the aptly-named Dudesnude.com. And some, like OkCupid.com, or even Facebook.com, Orkut.com, and Tribe.net, are less racy cross-overs originating in the straight but not narrow communities.



Gradually the features offered by the various services have converged so that now almost all of them offer posting and searching of personal ads, online messages with email notifications, cyber-chatting, visit tracking, and buddy lists. Webcam chat is offered by many of the services.

The latest trend is to see which guys on your buddy list are near you in physical space using an app like Grindr on a mobile device.

Cyber-Precautions When Dating Online

As the [Peter Steiner cartoon](#) published in a 1993 issue of *The New Yorker* pointed out, "On the Internet, nobody knows if you're a dog," and that applies to dating online as well.

Online daters must take care to find out what they can about someone before assuming that he is who he says he is. Never give that person personal information – bank account numbers, mother's maiden name, etc. – that can be used for identity or other theft.

Meeting first in a public place, such as a friendly cafe, restaurant, or bar, is a wise precaution, rather than inviting an unknown person into the home on the first date. If you do invite someone home, tell a friend or two to check in on you if they don't hear back by a certain time.

And remember to play safely – avoid passing on HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Some people cruise so much on the Internet that the rest of their life suffers, so it's best to avoid addictive behaviors online just like everywhere else.

Brave New Cyberworld

Gay guys can take advantage of this new virtual world to increase their chances of finding the right date, whether in place of or in addition to other means in the more physical realm. If nothing else, and especially for those who live in isolated locations or in more homophobic areas, the Internet offers gay folks another way to connect with one another.

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