Max Paradox

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

I Went on a Date, or Maybe It Was Customer Support

How to Move from App Chats to Dates with Clear Expectations



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INTRO

It's 9:47 p.m. You've been talking for several days. It started with an innocent "Hey, how's your day going?", followed by an exchange of interests, a few jokes, a photo of someone's coffee, a comment about the weather, and a conversation about how you both enjoy spontaneous trips. Along the way, you've established that neither of you likes Mondays, you value honesty, and you have similar approaches to life. It sounds promising. In fact, you could almost start looking into a shared streaming subscription, if it weren't for one small detail: you still have no idea whether you'll ever actually meet.

Eventually, you decide to ask: "Would you like to grab a coffee sometime?" The reply arrives three hours later.

"Absolutely, sounds like a great idea! We should definitely arrange something 😊"

And that's it. No date, no location, no actual plan. The idea has officially been approved for implementation, but nobody knows which quarter it belongs to. You can wait, follow up in a few days, or begin another round of negotiations with someone who clearly has excellent communication skills but rather limited availability in their calendar.

Welcome to the world of online dating, where sometimes it's easier to get a response from your mobile network provider's customer support department than to establish whether someone actually wants to meet you in real life.

And that wasn't quite the point, was it?

Dating apps promised simplicity. A few photos, a short bio, a swipe, a match, and the opportunity to meet someone

interesting. In theory, it's a modern version of meeting people, except you don't have to leave home or risk getting someone's name wrong during your first conversation. In practice, it can feel like taking on an additional part-time job, except without a salary, with unpredictable working hours and a bonus system based entirely on emojis.

You might have a dozen conversations, several promising matches, and one person you message every single day. You might also spend three weeks having fascinating discussions about everything from your favourite films to your childhood, only to discover that the other person has no intention of meeting. Not necessarily because they deceived you. Perhaps they were looking for entertainment, validation, company in the evenings, or simply didn't know what they wanted themselves. The problem is that you were also investing time, attention, and certain expectations without knowing whether you were both participating in the same story.

This is where one of the most important parts of dating begins, and it's something dating apps rarely explain properly: moving from online contact to an actual meeting.

Online conversations have their advantages. They give you time to think, allow you to learn basic information, and make starting a conversation easier for people who don't feel comfortable approaching strangers spontaneously. You can reply when you have time rather than when someone happens to be standing next to you, looking expectantly at your face. There is, however, a particular trap. It's surprisingly easy to confuse the intensity of communication with genuine closeness.

Daily messages create a sense of someone's presence. They ask how your day went, remember an important event,

send you a picture of their breakfast, and laugh at your jokes. Eventually, you start including this person in your everyday life. You don't yet know how they behave in ordinary situations, how they interact with other people, how they respond to disagreements, or whether they actually keep their commitments. But your imagination has already prepared several possible versions of your shared future.

That's perfectly human. The mind dislikes empty spaces, so it eagerly fills them in. The problem begins when we start treating our own assumptions as information confirmed by the other person. An enjoyable conversation is not yet proof of compatibility, and sharing a sense of humour in messages doesn't guarantee that you'll have anything to talk about when you're sitting across from each other at the same table.

That's why it's worth distinguishing three separate things from the beginning: interest, intentions, and readiness to meet. Someone can be interested in getting to know another person but currently have no room in their life for dating. Someone might be looking for a relationship but need time before feeling safe enough to meet. Someone else might simply enjoy chatting with people without planning to meet anyone at all. None of these attitudes is necessarily wrong. The trouble starts when people cannot express them clearly or assume that the other person automatically understands their expectations.

Being clear doesn't mean conducting an interrogation. You don't need to send someone you've just met a questionnaire containing twenty questions about their five-year plans, their attitude towards marriage, and their preferred division of household responsibilities. You're not a recruitment committee, and a potential date shouldn't feel

that they're about to receive a PDF assessment task. It's about something much simpler: being able to say what you're looking for, what you don't want, and where you currently stand.

It's equally important to notice whether the other person responds to that information through their behaviour, rather than simply offering pleasant words. Someone might declare that they're very eager to meet you but spend the next several weeks avoiding any attempt to arrange a date. Someone else might message less frequently but make a concrete suggestion and actually show up at the agreed location. The number of messages is not a reliable measure of commitment. Sometimes five sentences are enough to establish more than five hundred messages exchanged over the course of a month.

This doesn't mean that every conversation should quickly turn into a date. Safety, comfort, and individual pace matter. Meeting someone you've never seen in person should happen under conditions that allow you to feel comfortable. Choosing a public place, keeping the first date reasonably short, arranging your own transport, and telling someone you trust about your plans are ordinary precautions, not signs of excessive suspicion. You also don't owe anyone an explanation for declining a meeting if something makes you uncomfortable.

The most important thing is not to confuse patience with waiting indefinitely. You can give someone space without giving them the right to occupy your attention forever. You can remain open to seeing where a connection goes without abandoning your own boundaries. You can take the initiative without accepting sole responsibility for keeping the

conversation alive. And you can also end a conversation that has stopped moving in the direction you actually care about.

This book was written to help you bring some order to that process. It won't teach you how to manipulate another person, make them jealous, pretend to be unavailable, or construct messages that will instantly make everyone fall head over heels for you. There is no magic sentence that guarantees a successful date. If there were, someone would already be selling it as a premium package, and dating apps would have considerably fewer users.

What this book will show you is how to have conversations that don't turn into endless television series with no finale. How to recognise the difference between genuine interest and politely keeping in touch. How to suggest a meeting without creating unnecessary pressure, discuss expectations without making the other person feel interrogated, and respond to evasive answers without analysing every full stop and emoji. You'll also learn to evaluate a first date more sensibly instead of treating it like an examination whose result will determine the entire future of a potential relationship.

Not every conversation has to end in a date. Not every date has to develop into a relationship. Sometimes two perfectly pleasant people simply aren't right for each other. Sometimes a meeting doesn't live up to the expectations created during weeks of messaging. That's not a failure. It's information you could never have obtained by sitting in front of a screen every evening, wondering what the sender really meant by "we'll see".

Your goal isn't to collect as many matches as possible or keep every conversation you've ever started alive. It's to get to know people in a way that respects your time, their time,

and the actual needs of both sides. It's about moving from assumptions to conversation, from conversation to a concrete invitation, and from that invitation to a meeting where you can find out whether there's something interesting between you beyond the screen.

And if, after yet another exchange of messages, you hear "we should definitely arrange something sometime", you don't have to book a conference room or send a high-priority calendar reminder. All you need to do is ask whether they're talking about an actual meeting or simply another pleasant conversation with no scheduled implementation date.

After all, you're looking for another human being, not a new service provider with whom you'll spend an entire month negotiating the details of your first coffee.

Chapter 1 - A Match Is Not the Same as Getting to Know Someone

On a dating app, everything begins with a small gesture. You swipe right on someone's photo, a notification announces that you've matched, and for a moment you feel that something promising has happened. Two people have decided that they might be worth getting to know. The algorithm has done its part, the screen has displayed the appropriate message, and you can now start a conversation. It's actually a remarkably efficient process. The entire operation takes less time than ordering lunch, although the potential outcome can be considerably more complicated.

The problem begins when we treat a match as the beginning of a relationship rather than an opportunity to start getting acquainted. It might seem like a minor distinction, but it has enormous consequences for the way we interpret the other person's behaviour afterwards. Once you decide that something has already happened between you, every subsequent message starts carrying more weight than it deserves. A lack of response can feel like rejection, a brief "haha" can be interpreted as a sign of interest, and an ordinary question about the weekend can become an event requiring strategic analysis.

In reality, a match means only that two people, at a particular moment, have decided to see whether making contact might be worthwhile. It doesn't mean they share the same intentions, the same pace of getting to know people, the same attitude towards relationships, or even the same understanding of what dating actually involves. One person might be looking for a long-term relationship, another might

want to meet people without pressure, while a third might simply be checking whether they can still attract someone's attention with their profile. All three can use the same app and have equally attractive photographs.

It's worth adopting this perspective right from the beginning: a match is an invitation to explore a possibility, not confirmation of mutual compatibility.

Your Profile Is a Business Card, Not a Complete Biography

Let's look at how a typical impression of someone you meet through an app is formed. You see a few photographs, a short description, perhaps a list of interests and some information about what the person is looking for. Based on that material, you form an initial opinion. This is perfectly natural. Human beings need to process limited amounts of information quickly and decide whether someone deserves their attention.

There is nothing wrong with evaluating profiles. The app was designed precisely to allow users to make preliminary choices about the people who interest them. The trouble starts when we stop distinguishing between information and interpretation.

Someone has a photograph from a hiking trip in the mountains. You conclude that they enjoy an active lifestyle. That's a reasonable assumption. Then you start imagining that they're spontaneous, energetic, open to new experiences and probably excellent at handling every situation life throws at them. You don't actually know any of that. Perhaps the photograph was taken five years ago, and their greatest adventure these days is rushing to the supermarket before it closes.

The same thing happens with profile descriptions. Someone writes: "I value honesty, a good sense of humour and communication." It sounds wonderful, but it's difficult to imagine anyone deliberately putting this in their profile: "I prefer vague messages, rarely keep my commitments and believe that disappearing for four days is an excellent form of dialogue." Declarations are easy. Only behaviour reveals how someone actually understands the values they list.

That's why it's useful to read a profile on two levels. The first involves literal information: what the person is interested in, what their everyday life looks like, what they're looking for and what conditions or expectations they communicate. The second involves the questions that this information might inspire. If someone says they love travelling, you can ask about their most recent trip. If they mention enjoying a peaceful lifestyle, you can find out what a quiet weekend means to them. There's no need to immediately decide that you're a perfect match.

A profile should help you start a conversation, not replace the process of getting to know a human being. This becomes especially important when photographs and descriptions create an extremely attractive impression. The more you invent based on a handful of details, the greater the risk that you'll later try to force reality to fit your imagination.

Choosing Someone Is Not an Exam in Attractiveness

Dating apps encourage quick judgements. Another photograph, another profile, another decision. In this environment, it's easy to start thinking about dating as a competition in which you need to collect enough points to persuade someone to give you their attention.

Several unpleasant mechanisms can develop as a result. We begin interpreting a lack of matches as proof that we're not attractive enough. A large number of matches, on the other hand, can create the impression that every conversation should lead to something interesting. Both conclusions are oversimplifications.

The results displayed by an app are not an objective assessment of your personal worth. They're influenced by photographs, the way you present your profile, user activity, settings, other people's preferences and the mechanics of the platform itself. Even a very well-prepared profile won't make everyone you find interesting become interested in you. And the reverse is also true: one person's lack of interest doesn't mean you should immediately undertake a comprehensive renovation of your personality.

It's also worth remembering that attractiveness on an app isn't necessarily the same as attractiveness during an actual meeting. A photograph shows a particular appearance at a selected moment. It doesn't reveal how someone speaks, their sense of humour, their attentiveness, their energy, their behaviour in an unexpected situation or whether having a conversation with them is enjoyable. Those qualities become relevant only when you have an opportunity to meet someone beyond their profile.

A useful approach is therefore to reverse the perspective. Instead of asking only, "Will this person find me attractive?", start asking yourself, "Could this person be right for what I'm looking for?" This isn't arrogance. It's simply restoring a sense of balance.

You're choosing too. You have every right to find out whether someone communicates well, whether their declarations match their behaviour, whether you enjoy the

way they conduct a conversation and whether you feel comfortable around them. You don't have to win the interest of every person who catches your eye.

Why Several Matches Might Mean Less Than You Think

Imagine receiving five new matches in a single evening. At first, you're enthusiastic. Five possibilities, five new people, five potential stories. Two days later, you discover that you're exchanging occasional one-line messages with one person, another replies irregularly, a third immediately suggests moving to a different messaging platform, a fourth has an interesting conversation but never asks you any questions, and the fifth has simply stopped responding.

Do five matches mean that you've started five new relationships? Not necessarily. They mean you've received five opportunities to find out whether mutual interest exists.

This distinction helps you avoid one of the most exhausting traps of dating apps: becoming emotionally invested in possibilities that haven't yet taken any real shape. If, after a few messages, you start thinking of every person as a potential candidate for a serious relationship, you'll quickly become tired. Several parallel stories start developing in your head, even though none of them has progressed beyond the screen.

This doesn't mean you should treat people like objects or maintain a spreadsheet with individual ratings. It's about keeping the level of emotional investment proportionate to the amount of information you actually have. You can be curious about someone, remember details from your conversation and show genuine interest without building expectations that nothing has yet confirmed.

A simple principle works well here: your level of involvement should gradually increase as you gain more genuine knowledge about the other person and experience greater reciprocity in the contact. You don't need to be cold or calculating. You simply need to avoid getting emotionally ahead of events.

For example, if someone responds with interest, initiates conversations themselves and remembers things you've previously told them, you have reasonable grounds to continue getting acquainted. If, after several days, everything still depends on your initiative, there's no need to pretend the situation is equally promising. This isn't a judgement of that person's character. It's information about the current state of your communication.

Your Profile Should Attract the Right People, Not Everyone

Many people prepare their profiles with one objective: to appeal to as many users as possible. They choose their most flattering photographs, remove details that might discourage someone, and write descriptions so general that they could apply to half the population.

"I love travelling, good food and interesting conversations."

It's difficult to disagree with that. Even someone who dislikes travelling, good food and conversations probably wouldn't want to admit it.

The problem is that a profile without specific details gives the other person very little to work with. It doesn't reveal what you're like in everyday life, what you enjoy or what kind of connection might suit you. It's safe, but it doesn't communicate much.

A better description doesn't need to be long or exceptionally original. It should be truthful and contain details that help someone imagine what having a conversation with you might be like. Instead of saying that you enjoy an active lifestyle, you could mention that you like long walks, although not necessarily the kind where you have to conquer a mountain before breakfast. Instead of declaring your love for good food, you could say that you enjoy discovering new restaurants but have a weakness for places where the menu doesn't look like an instruction manual for industrial machinery.

Specific details give people something to ask about. They also allow you to show your personality without creating an artificial image.

Your photographs should be current and represent you in a way that doesn't require subsequent explanations. This doesn't mean giving up on flattering photographs altogether. Everyone has the right to choose a picture in which they look good. What's important is that your profile shouldn't create an image so different from reality that the first meeting turns into an unplanned discussion about the differences between the demonstration version and the finished product.

It's also worth being clear about what you're looking for. If you want a serious relationship, you can say so. If you want to meet people without pressure and see what develops, you can communicate that too. You don't need to present your entire philosophy of life. A little information is enough to prevent a basic misunderstanding.

Authenticity doesn't mean telling a stranger absolutely everything about yourself. You don't have to disclose private details, the full history of your previous relationships or your most sensitive personal information. It simply means that

what you choose to show is consistent with who you are and how you genuinely want to function in a relationship.

The First Message as a Test of Mutual Curiosity

When a match appears, many people start searching for the perfect opening line. Some prepare funny messages, others look for original questions, while others wait for the other person to make the first move. As a result, two people can both be interested in making contact but spend several days participating in a silent competition to see who will act first.

Your first message doesn't have to be a literary masterpiece. Its purpose is to start a conversation in a way that gives the other person an opportunity to respond. The easiest approach is to refer to something specific in their profile. If someone mentions an interest in music, you can ask about the last concert they attended. If a photograph shows an unusual location, you can ask where it was taken. If their description contains an interesting observation, respond to it.

This kind of opening has two advantages. It shows that you've actually read the profile instead of sending the same message to every user within a ten-mile radius. At the same time, it creates a natural topic that can develop into a conversation.

Avoid questions that require the other person to do all the work for you. "Tell me something about yourself" sounds like an invitation to talk, but in practice it's extremely broad. The recipient has to decide where to begin, how much to reveal and which direction to take the conversation. A specific question connected to something they've already chosen to share is much easier to answer.

This doesn't mean you always have to initiate contact. You can also wait and see whether the other person shows interest. What's important is not turning this into a personality test. Someone who doesn't write first isn't necessarily arrogant, just as someone who messages you after a few seconds isn't necessarily desperate. People have different habits and different levels of confidence when it comes to initiating contact.

The first message is simply the first small opportunity to observe how the two of you communicate. Notice whether a response arrives, whether the other person develops the topic and whether they give you room to continue. Don't judge the entire potential relationship based on a single sentence, but don't assume that you're responsible for producing the whole conversation by yourself either.

What Should You Check Before Investing More Time?

At the beginning, you don't need a complete picture of another human being. A few basic pieces of information are enough to help you decide whether continuing the contact makes sense.

Pay attention to three things:

- Consistency between words and behaviour. Does what the person says about their intentions have any reflection in the way they communicate?
- Reciprocity. Do both people ask questions, initiate conversations and show curiosity?
- Basic compatibility of expectations. Do you have a similar understanding of why you're using the app and how you want to get to know people?

You don't need to know all the answers after your first conversation. It's enough not to ignore obvious differences.

If someone openly says they don't want a relationship while you're looking for something stable, there's little point in assuming that your patience will eventually change their mind. If someone doesn't respect your pace, you don't have to speed things up simply to maintain their interest.

At the same time, don't expect perfection. Someone might have a difficult day, respond awkwardly or struggle to start an interesting conversation. One uncomfortable interaction isn't automatically an established pattern of behaviour. What matters is what keeps happening across subsequent conversations.

It's also important to distinguish a lack of compatibility from a lack of personal value. Someone can be pleasant, intelligent and attractive and still not be right for your expectations. You don't need evidence that the other person has done something wrong to decide that you don't want to pursue the connection. It's enough that you don't feel interested or that you recognise a difference in what you're both looking for.

The healthiest approach to dating apps begins when you stop treating every match as a prize you have to fight to win. You're not there to persuade as many people as possible that you're the right candidate. You're there to find out with whom you might create a connection that works for both sides.

A match creates an opportunity. A conversation provides the first information. Only subsequent experiences allow you to judge whether it's worth going further. There's no need to skip these stages, even if the app enthusiastically suggests that it has just found you someone extraordinary. An algorithm can point you towards a profile. It cannot get to know the person for you.

Chapter 2 - Why Does the Conversation Never Leave the Screen?

There is a particular kind of connection that can last for weeks without moving forward by even an inch. The conversation starts well. Questions, answers, jokes and increasingly detailed messages begin to appear. After a few days, you know what a typical day looks like for the other person, what their weekend plans are and what irritates them most about everyday life. You start exchanging photographs, sometimes even voice messages. It feels as though you're getting to know each other quite well.

Except there's still no date.

More days pass. The conversation continues, although you increasingly feel that everything has already been said. You know their favourite film, preferred way of spending holidays, attitude towards spontaneous trips and opinion of people who leave an empty milk carton in the fridge. You know a surprising amount. And yet you still have no idea whether the two of you could have a relaxed conversation while sitting at the same table.

This situation is more common than you might think. Long online conversations can create the impression of progress even when they lead to no concrete change. You receive a message every day, so technically the connection still exists. You have someone to tell about your day, you can send a funny photograph and occasionally feel that someone remembers you. At the same time, there is no arrangement that brings you any closer to meeting in real life.

It's a little like watching film trailers for an entire month. You already know the important scenes, recognise the actors and have started developing your own theory about the ending. You still haven't bought a ticket, though.

Sometimes the Conversation Is the Goal

The first thing worth understanding is rather uncomfortable: not everyone using a dating app wants to meet someone to the same extent. For some users, messaging is the most enjoyable part of the entire experience. It provides attention, entertainment, a sense of being wanted and the opportunity to meet people without having to make any decisions.

This doesn't necessarily mean they have bad intentions. Someone might be lonely, going through a difficult period, have very little free time or simply not be ready for an actual relationship. Online conversations are convenient because they allow that person to control the intensity of contact. They can respond whenever they feel like it, interrupt the conversation and return to it a few hours or even a few days later.

Meeting in person is different. It requires choosing a date and time, making preparations, setting aside time and accepting a certain degree of unpredictability. You have to show up somewhere specific, talk without being able to edit your message before sending it, and discover what interacting with the other person is actually like.

Some people are perfectly comfortable with this. Others prefer to remain in the safer environment of online communication.

That's why a long conversation shouldn't automatically be interpreted as increasing readiness to meet. You might be an

interesting person to talk to while still not being someone the other person intends to meet. This can be unpleasant, especially if you see messaging as a step towards getting to know someone in real life, but it doesn't change the fact that two people can have entirely different objectives.

It's also worth being careful with your own interpretations. If someone messages you every day, asks how you're feeling and remembers details, you might conclude that they're emotionally invested. Perhaps they are. However, being invested in a conversation and being ready to meet are two separate things. Only concrete behaviour can show whether these two areas are beginning to overlap.

The Comfort of Messaging Can Become a Trap

Communicating through a screen gives you a great deal of control. You can read a message, think about your response, change its wording and send it only when you're satisfied with how it sounds. You don't have to react immediately. You also don't see all the non-verbal signals that matter during face-to-face contact.

For many people, this is a tremendous advantage. Especially at the beginning of a new connection, writing about your interests can feel easier than talking about them with someone you've only just met. You can gradually become more confident and find out whether the other person responds well to your sense of humour.

The problem appears when both people become accustomed to this convenience. They begin building a connection that works well only under online conditions. Every message can be carefully considered, every topic can be changed when things become awkward, and every silence can be filled with another question.

A first meeting stops feeling like a natural next step and starts looking like a risky operation.

What if you have nothing to talk about? What if the other person isn't as funny as they are in messages? What if there's an awkward silence? What if you discover that you've spent three weeks talking to someone who, in person, can't manage more than "Yeah, exactly"?

The longer an online connection continues, the more expectations can become attached to it. Eventually, you're no longer simply meeting a stranger. You're meeting someone about whom you've developed certain assumptions, with whom you've established a routine and to whom you might have attributed qualities you haven't actually had the opportunity to verify.

That's why extending an online conversation doesn't always increase your sense of security. Sometimes it simply increases the emotional stakes of the eventual meeting.

This doesn't mean you should agree to meet someone after three messages without knowing anything about them. It is, however, worth recognising the moment when further messaging stops providing new information. If you're discussing the same topics for several consecutive days and neither of you makes an attempt to move the connection forward, perhaps you need to change the way you're communicating rather than send each other another photograph of your lunch.

Three Types of Stagnation That Are Easy to Confuse

Not every conversation that fails to lead to a meeting has the same underlying cause. From the outside, these situations can look similar, but the mechanisms behind them may be entirely different.