

Flirting Skills

Use this in whatever sequence feels fitting. Mix and match techniques to create your own style. Adapt as needed based on awareness of gender and cultural factors.

Always consider safety factors when implement flirting skills with strangers.

Above all, have fun and be playful!

1. Self Presentation

Experiment with grooming practices (e.g., hair styles, flattering clothes) that increase your confidence around persons to whom you are attracted. Notice what you find attractive about others as guidance. Consult with experts (e.g., friends, an employee at a clothing store) if you need guidance.

2. Smile and Hello Practice.

Acknowledge people as you pass them. You can use a variety of greetings. Try this with anyone who will return eye contact. Doing so conveys a sense of openness and willingness to interact with others. It also serves as a first step in exposure for social anxiety.

3. Posturing

Physically place yourself in spaces that are more convenient for conversation or near persons to whom you might want to start conversation (e.g., near a food table, high traffic areas, sitting at the bar instead of a table). Choose spaces where you can easily scan the room to make eye contact (to convey warmth and openness). Avoid places where you are separated or might convey a desire to be alone (e.g., sitting at a table, earphones on, back to the room).

4. Body Language

Make eye contact. Smile. Lean slightly toward the person when feeling connected. More lengthy interactions may allow you to try “fake touch” where you come close to touching someone, but do not actually touch them. If they respond positively to “fake touch” then you can carefully experiment with real touch (e.g., a brief arm touch, momentary touching with the foot if seated). If you enter a new space and want to start new conversations, immediately scan the room to offer eye contact to anyone who has noticed you entered.

5. False Time Constraints

Start a conversation with someone by including a false time constraint (e.g., “I just have a minute before I have to meet my friends, but wanted to ask you....”). This reduces the pressures others might experience if they are approached by a stranger. This also sends a message that you are person with plans and other commitments.

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Please do not reproduce or distribute without permission. Skills listed here build upon personal teaching from David Burns, MD and from his highly recommended book, “Intimate Connections: The Clinically Proven Program for Making Close Friends and Finding a Loving Partner.” Ideas are also adapted from the work of Neil Strauss in the book “Rules of the Game.”

6. Create “Openers”

“Openers” are used with someone new that you approach (on the street, at a coffee shop, in a grocery store line). Start by asking for information or their opinion. (e.g., “Have you tried the XXX they serve here? I’m trying to find something new today.” Or “Do you know how this product works? I’ve never tried this before.”) Or “My friend and I were just having this debate. Can you help us resolve it. What do you think about...?”). Always include a time constraint to avoid taking too much of the persons’ time (see above). You can also try brief statements of talking to yourself as an opener (e.g., near an attractive person at the grocery store, say aloud, seemingly to no one in particular, “gee, these lines are long today!”). This is a good way to gently test whether folks around you are open to engaging in conversation.

7. Keep the Spotlight on other Person (e.g., open ended questions).

Ask open-ended questions and take a genuine interest in the other person. This reduces the pressure we often feel to be interesting or say something witty or smart. You can make this more successful by including genuine compliments and using positive body language.

8. Genuine Compliments.

Find things you admire or like about the person and acknowledge them. You can try more simple external things (e.g., jewelry, outfit, their smile) or more deep/connecting topics (e.g., their personality, their commitment to others, the way they make you feel warm and connected).

9. Find Connection.

Listen for anything the person shares that you can relate to or agree with. Highlight these areas by conveying you are agreeable. Examples: “You like hiking, me too, it’s great.” “You said you were shy, I sure can relate to that. I am really shy too.”

10. Exit the Interaction Early

If a conversation or date is going well, try to end it before it has time to get boring or tedious. The goal is to leave the other person wanting more, not to leave them with memories of boredom. The same rule applies to phone or text interactions. It also conveys you are not desperate for their attention.

11. Self-Disclosure

Instead of hiding things we think might be unappealing to another person, we can share them in a way that shows acceptance. It tends to make people more accepting of us and it can reduce our own anxiety about hiding it. Example: I’m a really shy person. Sometimes I don’t know the right thing to say or worry people will think I’m boring because I’m not talkative. Do you ever struggle with what to say when you are meeting new people?” If you think you are too short, you might mention it in a teasing way that conveys awareness of

your height, but acceptance of it. Avoid self-deprecating statements that comes across as insecure.

12. Tease Gently/"Negs"

You might lightly tease the person. Do so in a way that invites them to defend themselves. Many people find this skill difficult and worry it could be offensive or harmful. Any technique can be used toward good or toward harm. Be sure to explore and practice how to do so in a respectful manner. Example: Noticing that someone has on very comfortable or conservative shoes: "I really like those shoes. They're quite sexy." Or noticing someone has a very wrinkled shirt saying, "Looks like you really like to iron."

13. Mention your Status/Selling Points Without Bragging

Lots of talk about your accomplishments or stellar traits will come across as bragging. Instead, mention things you are proud of in passing or as a side comment. This creates a hook and the person can ask more if interested. As an example, instead of: "I traveled a ton in the Peace Corp, in fact, I'm really a saint and very ethical person." Try something like: "It sounds like you've traveled a lot. I loved traveling a lot in the Peace Corp. So, where have you been?"

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