

Dating

Dating is a big topic, worthy of much more attention than what I will give it on the next page or two. However, the following points are a collection of thoughts that I think are important to any of my posterity contemplating this delightful diversion.

- The church has done a great job in outlining standards for those involved in dating in the publication, “For the Strength of Youth”. There are only a few points I would add. First of all, the pamphlet suggests you only date others that have “high standards”. It does not specifically state members of the church. Given the fact that we eventually marry who we date, I recommend that you only date worthy members of the church who you know have the same high, gospel standards you do. Someone once said only one out of seven marriages, where a member marries a non-member, results in an eventual temple marriage. Those are not very good odds. If you were going on a trip, would you get on an airplane if you knew that only one out of seven planes ever reached their destinations?
- Dating is intended to be for fun and social diversion when you are young (16-19). This is a time to double date or date in groups. The objective is to have fun interacting with others your own age. You are able to see people of the other sex and to see firsthand the differences between young men and young women. Under no circumstances do you want to have a steady boyfriend or girlfriend. Don’t constantly date the same person. This type of familiarity leads to promiscuity and problems. When you are in college and when young men have returned from missions, dating takes on a new perspective. In addition to dating for fun, you are now looking for a person that would be a great spouse for you. You are now a little more analytical and selective of whom you date. Your goal is to move from the dating phase to “courtship” when you find the person most attractive to you as a prospective spouse.
- Be fun and creative. Try to use your imagination. This goes both ways, for the girl and for the guy. For example, I went to pick up a young lady for a Prom once with corsage in hand. It was a flower out of our garden and I had put in the corsage box a couple snails. It created quite a scene when I asked her mother to help me pin the flower to her. Of course, I had a beautiful Orchid corsage ready to go after the hysteria died down. Once I had a candle light dinner with a young lady. I was chauffeured to her house by Uncle Thom (dressed in a dark suit and chauffeur’s hat) in a freshly waxed Mercedes Benz that belonged to grandpa. We were whisked back to our house where we had shrimp cocktail and a steak dinner. (The waiter was none other than the chauffeur.)
- President Trulan Rockwood was famous for drawing stick figures when he wanted to delineate the do’s and don’ts in a physical relationship while dating. Typically he would draw a line at the neck. Kissing (above the line) was ok. Any kind of physical contact below that line was inappropriate, i.e., petting. My recommendation is a little different. When you are in that 16-19 year old age bracket, the time when you are dating for fun, do not even kiss. That is not the time. When you are older and you are dating with the purpose of finding a spouse, then kissing becomes an acceptable practice. It is a way of expressing your love and affection for a person. However, at any time prior to marriage, it is inappropriate to “make out”. You know you have

crossed the line any time your actions are creating arousal in one or both of those involved. This can only lead to an improper physical relationship that always ends in regret and sorrow. Time and time again, those that have reached a certain level of intimacy, find it very easy to get back to that point in subsequent dates.

- Be careful what you advertise. If young ladies wear short skirts and tight-fitting clothing, it sends many wrong messages. It attracts a young man's attention for the wrong reasons. It communicates that the young lady really has different standards than what the church teaches. It suggests that you are "easy". Young men need to dress neatly. If they cuss or swear, they show their lack of good judgement. When they make choices to view inappropriate movies they show their lack of values and disregard for womanhood. They need to be sensitive to girls they date. If a beautiful young lady wants to marry nothing but the best, then the young man must be the best example of a responsible priesthood holder he can. In short, if you expect to marry a wonderful person, you need to be just as wonderful. Like attracts like.
- Use common sense. There are always places and circumstances you need to avoid when you are dating. If you plan or allow yourself to be alone with a person in a car late at night, your chances of getting into trouble are a lot greater. A good rule of thumb is to avoid any place where the spirit of the lord cannot be. For example: a bar with its attendant smoking and drinking, a concert where loud, irreverent and vulgar music is being played, and, bedrooms or isolated places where being alone together could lead to trouble.
- Use good manners. We have always said in our house that the same manners we practice in our home will follow us out into the public. Time and time again I have seen others and our own family "slip" and do something that is not good manners in public. We need to practice good manners in our home and make it a matter of habit. When we date, we want to put our best foot forward and displaying good manners is a great way to accomplish this.
- During courtship, dump the person that does not measure up. Do it before you become too personally involved with the individual. It is possible to fall in love with someone even though they do not meet the criterion you hold up as a benchmark. This is especially important if you recognize in the person strong, negative qualities that will not help you reach the happiness you deserve in a marriage. You have a right to be very selective.
- If you ever have problems, do not be so proud that you do not talk to your parents or your bishop. Sometimes you hesitate because these are the same people that hold you in such high regard. It is important to get things cleaned up and for you to get back on track. They can help.
- A good rule of thumb: do those things that you would have no problem sharing with your parents upon arriving home after a date.