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Number Theory

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SEND TO FRIEND



With love, sometimes it's all in the numbers.

No, we're not referring to how many people you've slept with or your bank account balance. We're talking about getting out there -- and standing out once you do.

I met my husband on the internet. Which is great for me, and not so bad for you, either, because he's a math teacher, and math teachers have an interesting perspective on the world. They spout things like "The Law of Large Numbers," which is a lovely

theory in its own scientific right that also happens to apply perfectly to dating.

Here goes: The Law of Large Numbers demonstrates that an event with a low probability of occurrence in a small number of trials has a high probability of occurrence in a large number of trials. Simply put, the more times you do it, the more times you'll succeed. Like throwing pebbles in the pond, bread upon the water, or smiles across a crowded room — the more you chuck, the better the luck.

As it comes to dating, the more "out there" you are, whether it's at the market, the cleaners or a little league game, the better your chances are of meeting a potential suitor. Then there's outdoor jazz concerts, fairs, day hikes that result in a nasty case of poison ivy, forcing you to have a chat with the charming pharmacist ... your world is literally one speed date after another.

And when it comes to numbers, consider this: Match.com claims a membership of 20 million. Yahoo Personals declares upwards of 10 million. That's not even mentioning all the local sites, the religious-oriented sites, hobby-centric sites, etc. Looking at the glass as half-empty, that's a lot of competition. But looking at that glass as if it were a fine piece of Waterford, that's a whole lot of wonderful.

Once you are committed to the idea of internet dating, and ready to capitalize on the Law of Large Numbers, I have a few more numbers for you -- the three rules of a successful online profile:

1. Only post happy, peppy pictures reflecting exactly what you look like today.

Posting three pictures gives a good variety, with a close-up, a midrange (from the waist up) and a full body. Don't shoot the pictures yourself—they're never all that flattering. Instead, have a friend take the shots.

Other than a warm, close-up shot looking straight into the lens of the camera, use the opportunity presented by having to take pictures as another way of telling potential daters all about you. If you love biking, then take action shots mid-pedal. If cooking is your passion, then chop and sauté your way through the photo shoot (keeping the background as clutter-free as possible). If your dogs are your life, then go ahead and include them, but no pictures of the pups without you. People want to see you, not how that live volcano looked as you snapped its picture from the plane.

And here's a secret about hitting 40: No one expects a teenager in Speedos or bikinis. Seriously. So, no bathing suit photos online either.

2. Choose an evocative headline.

No clichés will do. Ideally, you want the headline to provide a tease — whether it's an example of your sense of humor or a clue about some interesting facet of yourself — to make a reader think about clicking to see a bit more. Yahoo gives you 40 characters, and Match.com allows 128. Be creative and have fun.

3. Tell them about yourself, but not everything about yourself.

"The Essay" portion of your profile can be your time to shine, although the word "essay" is a misnomer. It needs to be more of a snapshot, at the very most a three-paragraph, broadstroke sense of you. Since we live in the age of bits and bytes, you need to hook readers with a snappy opening and leave them wanting more.

Think of it as your "commercial." If you're having trouble, write down a list of the highlights of your life, which will invariably give you a good kickstart. Specifics matter. It's not just that you like movies, as it is that you go nuts for Billy Crystal buddy flicks. It's not about sweets, but the fact that you'd cross the desert for a Yorkshire Peppermint Patty. The more detail, the more you come across as a unique personality in your own right.

As for anything negative, this not the forum to write down a laundry list of undesirable qualities in a mate. Ironically enough, by writing anything negative, it's you that comes off in the bad light. Heaven forbid!

And there we have it. The Law of Large Numbers is now officially in effect. Get out there ... because the more dates you have, the more chances you have of going on a good date. Plus, with my tips, you'll be head and shoulders above the crowd.

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