

6 Great First-Date Questions (and 4 to Skip)



 by Rachel Seliger for GalTime.com

There's a lot that goes into making a first date great – picking the perfect spot, wearing the right clothing, having a positive attitude and, of course, maintaining good conversation.

So you have a first date coming up – good for you! You've already accomplished the hardest part, which is landing that romantic meeting. I always try to look at a first date as an opportunity – even if you don't meet the man or woman of your dreams, you can chat with a new, interesting person.

Below are some of my go-to topics and questions for first dates. I like to pick subjects that can lead to multiple conversation paths and, at the same time, help reveal more about my date.

1. Ask, “What attracted you to your job?” instead of the overused, “What do you do for a living?” which sounds like you're at a networking event. Get to the root of your date's 9-to-5 by asking more about his or her ambitions and character than his or her job title.

2. Take note of his or her interests and then dig a little deeper. If you're having the first in-person meeting with someone you met online, use bits and pieces of information from his or her online dating profile to keep the conversations flowing. The profile is there for a reason – study it, but don't look like a crazy stalker. Instead of gushing, “I love the Arctic Monkeys, too!” say something like, “I love checking out new music, and I'm really into indie

rock. How about you?"

3. Ask, "Are you close with your family?" This question works great because it subtly reveals a number of things about your date, and can lead to several other conversation topics. You could end up discussing siblings, extended family, funny childhood memories or the place your date grew up. Just remember to ask follow-up questions. For example, if your date answers, "Yeah, I'm close with my sister," ask, "Where does she live? How often do you see her? How far apart are you in age?"

4. "Want to try the [weird menu item]?" What are first dates for if not adventure? This question can reveal how daring your date is. But it isn't reserved for just the bold – maybe you're looking for someone more grounded, who will reply, "No, thanks. I'll stick to the chicken." In addition, this question can lead to other stories, such as that time your date tried a really strange food when traveling in South America.

5. Tap into current events. If there's a big holiday coming up, ask what his or her plans are for the day – working, spending time with family or friends, traveling, etc. However, one newsy topic you should avoid is politics. Especially in the current national climate, this can be a contentious subject; you don't want to get into a debate at the dinner table!

6. If you run out of things to say or your mind goes blank, don't panic! Honesty goes a long way in overcoming awkwardness. Just laugh and fess up, with something like, "I've been really looking forward to this date, and now that it's here, I'm a little nervous!"

As an added bonus, here are some of the most cringe-worthy first date conversation attempts I've heard from friends, colleagues and fellow online daters. Whatever you do, avoid the following – trust me, even silence would be better.

1. Never comment or make suggestions regarding your date's body parts or physical appearance. Unfortunate real-life examples include: "You have such a great body, it would be a shame if you gained weight from eating [food currently on the table]" or "Would you ever consider plastic surgery?"

2. Don't bring up money – this includes salary, the cost of your meal, spending habits or even the national debt. Money is a sensitive topic, and while finances are an important topic for long-term partners to discuss, it's not first date fodder.

3. Never bring up an ex. Dating histories should be shared in a relationship, but not on the first date! In particular, don't tell your date he or she reminds you of your previous partner – like showing your date pictures of an ex that you still have on your phone.

4. In general, avoid anything too heavy (e.g. my parents just got divorced, I just got divorced, I just got out of rehab). Heavy topics are best left for later. But that's not to say one should be dishonest, ever; it's just too soon to share such personal information on the first date.

Remember, your date is just as excited and nervous as you are, and is also pondering how to make conversation with you. So during your pre-date prep, keep in mind that you'll want to have answers ready for him or her! If all else fails, there's always the weather.