

# 52 First Dates



**A Plural Dating Game**  
By the Spindrift Crew

**i**

# 52 First Dates

**52 First Dates** is a rules-light tabletop roleplaying game for 4 or more players about going on 52 blind dates while plural.

*Well.* You probably won't play out 52 dates in one session (or even ever)! More likely you'll just play out a few, either a pre-arranged number or until the players agree they've enjoyed playing and are ready to stop.

## What You Need

Okay, you need to get the following together:

- At least three players; preferably four to six, and usually no more than eight
- Two decks of standard poker cards; they should have different backs
- One copy of the System Sheet
- One copy of the Outside Interference Sheet
- One Date Sheet per player
- One Headmate Sheet per player
- One Game Reference Sheet per player
- Pencils
- *optional, but recommended* Extra paper for notetaking

## The Purpose of 52 First Dates

This game attempts to do four things at once. It's up to you, the players, to determine if it succeeds at any of those. The four goals are to be a game that:

1. Has multiple players playing the same character
2. Educates about plural systems
3. Functions as an interesting dating sim
4. Is actually fun to play

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# Game Design Philosophy

Our take on indie game design<sup>1</sup> is that of an ongoing conversation where a number of different voices weave in and out with their contributions that answer the question, “What *is* a roleplaying game? What *can* a roleplaying game *be*? ”

All of our games are made with that in mind: this is our part in the conversation, right here, right now. We may have more to add later, but this is what we want to say now.

Very few concepts in the game are *completely* new. For example, card-based games have long been a part of the hobby, to varying degrees of success. Romance/dating sim tabletop RPGs aren’t as common, but they’re out there – most notably by Emily Care Boss in her *Romance Trilogy*.

Games where many players run the same character are even more rare; and I don’t know of any that address it from the standpoint of a plural, shared character. If you do, let me know!

But just as nobody invents all the words they speak, the magic isn’t in the parts you use but how you assemble them – or even beyond that, in what you *actually* say with those words.

Hopefully we’ll be able to communicate our message to you as you play [52 First Dates](#)!

## A System Introduction

Like many tabletop roleplaying games, [52 First Dates](#) is a collaboration between a group of people. Unlike many, that group are all in the same body.

Hello! We’re the Spindrift Crew!

This is a departure from the way we normally write TTRPGs, which is to try and maintain a consistent voice throughout. We’re purposely doing things differently for [52 First Dates](#) because we think it’s important for this game, and thematically sound.

Rather than interjecting comments into the flow of the text, we decided to use sidenotes in the gutters, each signed with an emoji so you know who’s speaking.

1. Dera totally wrote this section, she’s so wordy 

## No Fascists

If you're a fascist, you're not welcome to play this game. It's against the rules.<sup>2</sup>

If you're reading this and thinking, "You just call everyone you disagree with a fascist," then you're probably a fascist, or incapable of drawing inferences from context and acknowledging a dangerous political climate that causes the oppressed to be hyperbolic.

Don't play this game. Heal yourself. Grow. Learn. Watch some Mister Roger's Neighborhood or something.

This is who we are:

 **Cadera Spindrift**, primary fronter and project coordinator (she/her)

 **Dera**, our analytical headmate and game mechanics wonk (she/her)

 **Carline Stone**, social justice druid and in-house sensitivity reader (she/her)

 **Aura**, flirty lesbian disaster (she/her)

 **Valorie**, generally quiet protector (she/her)

 who doesn't speak or write except in emojis; not a fox (fae/him/it/them)

## Credits

**52 First Dates** was created by Cadera Spindrift<sup>3</sup> as part of the Otherships Jam 3 hosted by Metaparadox.

The contents of the game are covered by the *Anti-Capitalist Attribution Cooperative License*, written by Takuma Okada]{.spin}; a copy of which can be found at the end of the rules.

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4.0) license.

*No Fascists rule* by Olivia Hill, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution - Share-Alike 4.0.

“More Than One: A Plural 101” by anonymous at MoreThanOne.info; used under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license. (Retrieved June 20, 2021.)

*The TTRPG Safety Toolkit* is a resource co-curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk. The TTRPG Safety Toolkit is a compilation of safety tools that have been designed by members of the tabletop roleplaying games community for use by players and GMs at the table. You can find it at [bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit](http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit). Specific items in the toolkit are credited as follows:

- *The TTRPG Safety Toolkit Quick Reference Guide* was created by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk
- *Lines and Veils* were designed by Ron Edwards
- *The X card* was designed by John Stavropoulos
- *The O card* was designed by Kira Magrann
- *The N card* was designed by Mysty Vander and Adam Cleaver, based on the Support Flower by Taylor Stokes
- *The Script Change RPG Toolbox* was designed by Beau Jágr Sheldon
- *The Luxton Technique* was originally written by P.H.Lee and reposted by Beau Jágr Sheldon
- *The Open Door* was designed by Eirik Fatland
- *Stars and Wishes* was designed by Lu Quade

Definitions in the Lexicon are adapted from Pluralpedia, the collaborative plurality dictionary. and are used under a Creative Commons Attribution - Share-Alike 3.0 Unported license. (Retrieved 2021-06-20)



Honest, open, and empathic communication is essential to playing safely.

## Safety Tools

Playing the [52 First Dates](#) RPG should be enjoyable for everyone.

To help ensure that everyone has an enjoyable experience, we recommend the *TTRPG Safety Toolkit*, which we've included below. You should *not* play [52 First Dates](#) without using at least one such tool in your game.

In addition, we specifically call out certain points in the rules that need special attention from Game Guides and players. These are marked with an alert symbol.

### What are safety tools?

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Sometimes games have content or situations where a player or GM may feel stressed out, unsafe, or otherwise not having fun. Safety tools are a way for players and GMs to communicate and check-in before, during, and after a game in order to make sure everyone is still having fun, and to provide the right support when needed.

Communication, trust, and care The key to safety tools is communication and trust. There needs to be open and respectful communication alongside a culture of trust for these to work.

As a GM, player, or organizer, you can create this culture by making it clear that the care and well-being of everyone at the table comes before the game or story. This can be done by actively listening to everyone, offering accommodations and safety tools, implementing actions when asked while not prying (nobody owes you their trauma as explanation), and actively checking in before, during, and after a game.

# The toolkit

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Different safety tools work better for different people and games. Finding the ones that best suit the needs of everyone at the table is important, and should be facilitated through discussion at the start of every new game or new group.

This guide provides summaries of some safety tools and techniques (with the original designers' permission) to add to your own toolkit. This includes the **X-card system**, the **Script Change RPG Toolbox**, the **Luxton Technique**, and more. Sources and links are provided at the end of this guide for the full original materials, and the toolkit is regularly updated with new tools.

## Before the Game Begins

### *Session 0*

Session 0s are a great way to begin communication, set expectations on the kind of story and play, and introduce and discuss what safety tools will be used at the table.

### *Lines and Veils*

**Lines and veils** are used to set boundaries on content in a game.

**Lines** are hard limits on content, things that the GM or the players don't want to engage in. Setting up a line means that content won't show up in the game at all.

**Veils** are soft limits, things that are ok "behind a curtain" or when they "cut-to-black." Setting up a veil means that the content might be in the game but not spotlighted or described in great detail.

**Lines and veils** can be adjusted as needed throughout the game.

### *Script Change Rating*

**Script Change** ratings are used to set tone and boundaries for your game. Using film ratings (or your own), you can outline what audience you're playing for (e.g. PG-13 vs R).

The **rating** also addresses what content players do want to see as well as what they don't want to see. Make sure to balance and respect everyone's do and don't wants.

**Ratings** and do-and-don't-want content can be adjusted as needed throughout the game.

### *Luxton Technique Discussion*

In the **Luxton Technique**, have an open discussion between everyone at the table about potential trauma triggers. This is with the understanding that it's not possible to identify every single possible trigger or trauma, and that there is no social pressure to go into details or individual justifications for a trigger.

## **During the Game**

### **X, N, and O Cards**

**X, N, and O cards** are check-in tools. They can be used by tapping physical cards, typing the letter in the chat function of the video conference software or virtual tabletop you are using, or using hand signals. Before the game begins, remind everyone that they are available and how to use them.

The **X card** can be used at any point if a participant is uncomfortable with the content happening in-game. When the **X card** is used by tapping the card or typing an “**X**” in the chat, the group can change, rewind, or skip the content.

The **N card** can be used at any point if a participant feels like they are headed towards an X. When the **N card** is used by tapping the card or typing an “**N**” in the chat, the group can change the content or have the scene “fade to black.”

The **O card** can be used at any point if a participant wants to continue with the content. When the **O card** is used by tapping the card or typing an “**O**” in the chat, the group is ok to continue with the content. They can also regularly be prompted by a “**O?**” asked out loud or in the chat to check-in if everyone is still ok.

## **Script Change**

The **Script Change RPG Toolbox** is a collection of tools that can be used to adjust play and content. They can be used by tapping physical cards, typing the letter in the chat function of the video conference software or virtual tabletop you are using, or using hand signals. Before the game begins, remind your players that they are available and how to use them.

**Rewind**  can be used when something has happened in play that makes a participant uncomfortable. When **Rewind**  is used by tapping the card, typing the shorthand in the chat, or stating it out loud (“I’d like to rewind...”), be clear about what content is being adjusted, rewind to a point before it happened, and play starts again.

**Fast Forward**  can be used when a participant would like to skip past uncomfortable content or to the next part of the story for pacing. When **Fast Forward**  is used by tapping the card, typing the shorthand in the chat, or stating it out loud (“I’d like to fast forward...”), skip forward to a new spot in the story that everyone agrees on.

**Pause**  can be used when things are too intense, but you still want to continue playing the scene. When **Pause**  is used by tapping the card, typing the shorthand in the chat, or stating it out loud (“I’d like to pause...”), you can take a break and/or discuss the content as needed.

After the **Pause** , you can **Resume** , **Rewind** , **Fast Forward** .

**Resume**  can be used when everyone is ready to continue play, often after adjusting or discussing content. When **Resume**  is used by tapping the card, typing the shorthand in the chat, or stating it out loud (“Let’s resume...”), continue with play.

## *Luxton Technique*

With the **Luxton Technique**, when a participant comes across triggering content in play, they can choose to discuss it with the other people at the table.

The participant is given complete control over that content, expressed as a need or want for how play will continue. This can include in-game directions for plot and characters, as well as out of game needs such as breaks.

After the need and wants are expressed, everyone continues play to accomodate the requests.

## *Open Door*

The **Open Door** is the assurance that someone can leave or take a break from the game for their own safety and well-being without being judged. State this at the beginning and periodically throughout the game.

## *Breaks*

For games longer than 2 hours or games that have intense content, having a short built-in break is recommended to allow people to stay focused and process. Allow for discussion, bio breaks, or any other needs during this time.

## *After the Game*

### *Bleed*

Emotions and stress from the game can bleed over into post-game life. This can affect the enjoyment of the game, as well as out-of-game relationships between players and GM if not worked through.

Being open and honest about where the game begins and ends, and being conscious of which feelings belong to the player and which are just bleed, helps to mitigate the effects.

### *Aftercare*

Together as a group after the game, check-in with everyone to see how they are feeling. This is an open way for everyone to emotionally decompress, talk through, and process the events of the session in a safe environment.

Encourage everyone to practice their own forms of self-care and remind them that their mental health comes first.

### *Debriefing*

Debriefing as a group is a great way to reflect on the game, identify possible issues, highlight the fun things to continue, and work through potential bleed. Debriefing can happen right after the game or in the days following the stream.

### *Stars and Wishes*

**Stars and wishes** are used to reflect on the session and communicate feedback in a positive and forward-facing way. At the end of the game, go around and get everyone to state a star and wish.

**Stars** are things that the participants really enjoyed and loved about the game. This could include a particular moment of roleplay, an encounter created by the GM, or anything else that stuck out as something awesome during the game.



**Wishes** are things that the participants would like to see in future sessions. This could include particular interactions between characters, potential story moments and development, or anything else that could make the game even better in the future.

### *Highlight Reel and Wrap Session*

Similar to **stars and wishes**, Script Change has **Highlight Reel** and **Wrap Session**.

The **Highlight Reel** is used to reflect on the session and highlight moments participants enjoyed. At the end of the game, go around and get everyone to state highlight of the game for them. This could include a particular moment of roleplay, an encounter created by the GM, or anything else that stuck out as something awesome during the game.

The **Wrap Session** is an opportunity for the group to reflect on the session and discuss what could be improved going forward. At the end of the game, go around and open up discussion about the game. This could include content participants didn't feel comfortable calling pause or rewind at the time, or talking about emotional impacts and bleed.

There should be no social pressure to disclose the details or trauma to justify why someone felt uncomfortable or unsafe during the game, as long as the discussion moves towards how to address the issues going forward.

It's important to share what you enjoyed about a game, as well as what you'd like to see changed.

# More Than One: A Plural 101

The following section contains information about plurality that should be read and understood by the players before playing [52 First Dates](#). It's adapted from [MoreThanOne.info](#).

Plurality (or multiplicity) is the existence of multiple self-aware entities inside one physical brain.

You could think of a plural collective as a group of lifelong roommates, but with a body instead of an apartment.

It's a concept that fascinates many, the idea of always sharing your life with others, never being alone no matter where you go. Yet, for all that, there's a lack of understanding and a great deal of stigma surrounding plurality, and many plurals hide as a result.

## Terms

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There are many terms related to plurality. These are only the most common ones.

Different plurals have different preferences when it comes to language. Treat this list just as a starting point.

**System** (or collective): The plural group that resides within a single brain.

**Fronting:** When an individual controls the collective's shared physical body, sometimes called the "front".

**Headspace:** An internal landscape shared by a collective, and often where people go when they are not at front.

**Singlet:** Someone who is not plural. One being in one brain.

**Switching:** When collective members exchange control over the front.

## Causes

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It is not fully known what causes plurality, and it is likely there is not a single cause.

The clinical diagnoses of Dissociative Identity Disorder and Other Specified Dissociative Disorder are typically believed to originate from severe childhood trauma.

Outside clinical psychology, some plurals attribute their plurality to non-trauma causes. Some consider it a difference in their brain that they were born with. Others consider it a spiritual phenomenon.

There are even plurals who were not originally plural, but who became plural when their mental creations came to life, accidentally or intentionally.

There are also plural collectives who do not know their origin, who have mixed origins, or who do not see origin as relevant at all.

There are differences in functioning between the various plural origin types. For example, trauma plurals tend to experience more issues with memory and numerous PTSD-related difficulties that many non-trauma plurals do not.

However, they all share the common thread of being more than one.

## Myths

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### Myth: Plurality is ultra-rare.

The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation places the prevalence of DID at approximately 1 to 3% worldwide. This is in the same scope as autism or OCD. The number is only higher once you add in OSDD plurals and plurals who do not identify within clinical terms.

While plurals are certainly not a majority, it is highly likely you've encountered at least one over the course of your life without realizing it!

### Myth: Plurals are dangerous.

This particular myth is likely due to Hollywood's many portrayals of DID plurals as violent axe-murderers. To say the least, don't believe everything you see on the big screen.

According to a statement released by the ISSTD, recent research finds no correlation between having DID and committing crimes. Those with DID are much more likely to be the victims of violent crime than the perpetrators.

Sadly, most violence done by DID plurals is towards themselves. Over 70% of those with DID have attempted suicide at least once, due to (among other things) the weight of past trauma, comorbid health issues, lack of access to competent and compassionate healthcare, and

frequent retraumatization from social stigma and ignorance.

There are no statistics released for plurals outside the clinical scope, but it is safe to say that they are unlikely to be violent either, no more than any other marginalized group.

### **Myth: Plurals are mentally ill and need to merge to become healthy.**

While it was once commonly believed in psychiatry that plurality was inherently disordered, modern treatment guidelines now acknowledge that it is possible to live successfully and happily as a plural. Informed therapy for DID now focuses more upon resolving past trauma and teaching collectives to work together, with integration (the formal term for merging) optional.

Even after learning cooperation and working through past trauma, some plurals still find being plural difficult and opt for integration. Others can't even fathom the thought, and view the concept with great uneasiness. Still others may partially integrate, while others may attempt integration, only to find that singleness either isn't possible for them or only makes things more difficult.

Just as with everything else, integration is personal for every plural. The decision to integrate or to remain plural can only be made by them, and them alone.

### **Myth: Plurality is all made-up.**

Brain imaging studies have been conducted on DID plurals that have shown significant differences between collective members, differences that were not present in trained actors who were pretending to have DID.

There have been no such studies done on non-clinical plurality yet, but interest has been growing in the field.

### **Myth: Plurality is a miserable state of being / a gift with no downsides.**

Plurality is neither inherently better or worse than singleness (one entity in one body). Some plurals are happy being plural, some are unhappy, and others are in-between.



Never being alone can be a blessing. It can also be a curse. You can be super close to your roommates, or you might fight a lot, or you might just get along. And sometimes you can have things going on that make having roommates easier or harder. Even the best of friends fight sometimes.

All of this is true for plural collectives as well. It can be challenging to make sure every member is heard and taken care of. It can also be rewarding, when everyone supports each other to achieve things they couldn't alone.

## What is it like?

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There are many ways to be plural, and many dimensions to living as plural.

This page only barely scratches the surface, and is not representative of all plurals. Don't be surprised if you meet a collective who hasn't been described here!

Just as with any other group of people, members within plural collectives vary in how and how well they get along with each other. Some coexist happily while others fight, but in all cases, they must learn how to communicate, compromise, and cooperate amongst themselves. On top of the basics are various unique challenges related to sharing a body, such as managing outside time and relationships as a group. It is an experience with both its challenges and rewards.

## Identity

Plural collectives vary greatly in how separate their members are. A collective might see themselves as one being made of many facets, or many people cohabiting one head, or even somewhere in-between. Members may also vary greatly in how different their personalities are:

You can't tell if someone's plural just by looking at them. Is this one person or six?

there are collectives where the members are extremely similar in terms of beliefs and behaviors, and others where the members are as different as any group of people picked at random off the streets.

The subjective identities and self-images of collective members might not match their body. There are members who may be internally younger or older than their body's age, members who are of different genders, and even nonhuman members.

## Communication

Communication between members is crucial to a collective's functioning. Establishing internal communication, in fact, is a major part of DID therapy.

Some collectives are able to communicate with each other relatively easily, simply by thinking what they want to say at each other, like internal telepathy. In many cases, they are able to send raw thoughts and feelings to each other in addition to words, making communication somewhat easier (but not infallible).

There are some collectives who cannot communicate mentally at all, and instead communicate by leaving each other notes, keeping schedules and to-do lists, and writing in journals.

There are many collectives who fall somewhere in the middle, being only able to communicate through vague impressions. There are also cases where some members of a collective will be able to communicate easily, while others will have much more difficulty.

Even in collectives who can communicate reliably, communication can be disrupted by life stress, improper medication, or other factors, and so many groups have contingency measures for if this happens.

## Headspace

Internal worlds vary greatly in terms of scope and function. Some headspaces are extremely simple, being nothing more than a single room or field where people can talk. Others are more elaborate: small villages, great mansions, sprawling forests. Still others are as complex as any fantasy writer's paracosm.

Some collectives do not have internal worlds at all. Instead, when someone is not actively fronting, they sit in the "backseat" or fall asleep.

## Switching

Plural collectives vary in both the amount of switching they do, and the measure of control they have over it.

There are some collectives who never, or almost never switch. There is one member who stays at front, while the others stay in the headspace.

There are some collectives who switch constantly, handling their physical life in shifts of hours, days, or even weeks. Certain members may have specific jobs: for example, one member may attend school or work, while another handles chores at home, while another steps in only to handle dangerous situations.

For those groups who switch, there is a spectrum in terms of how much control groups have over their switching. Some may be able to switch almost at will, while others have almost no control. Many fall in between: switching can be controlled for the most part, but there are still conditions that will cause members to either involuntarily swap or get “stuck.” As with communication, both establishing a greater degree of control over switching and finding ways to manage involuntary switches are major parts of DID therapy.

## Governance

There are many ways by which collectives govern themselves, laying down rules for everything from how to interact with people outside, to how to take care of their body, to how to treat each other.

Some collectives, especially smaller ones, are extremely informal about their governance. Like a group of roommates, they decide on some basic guidelines and ask each other when if in doubt.

Some collectives have a single individual, or group of individuals who are trusted to handle everything related to a collective’s outer life. Others might have everyone vote on bigger decisions. Some expand this further, creating internal parliaments, and writing up formal charters.

Very few collectives run themselves without any rules at all — some degree of order, even if it’s as simple as a shared agreement to harm none outside or inside, is vital to successfully living together.

## Etiquette

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Every system has their own preferences on how they would like to be treated, but the following tend to be common rules of thumb.

Do not ask if they are dangerous. Hollywood is not a reliable source of information.

Don't ask to meet the “real” person. Everyone in a plural collective is real.

Don't assume that members of the collective have the same opinions, preferences, etc.

Do not out a collective without their permission, even if you think the person you are outing them to would be understanding.

Do not push them into therapy or medication against their will. If they haven't expressed any interest in integration, don't broach the topic with them. (Likewise, if they have decided to pursue care of their own volition, don't push them out of it.)

Do not pry into their trauma history, if applicable. (This includes asking if they have one.)

Remember that a plural collective is a group of beings. Many appreciate it greatly when outsiders refer to individual members with their individual names and pronouns. (After all, it's awkward to refer to someone by their sibling's name.)

If you're not familiar with them as individuals, many plurals will have some preference on how to refer to them as a collective: usually with plural “they/them,” and with their group name. (You might think of this as referring to someone by their surname/family name.)

If in doubt, ask what they prefer, and follow their lead.

Essentially: respect their right to privacy and self-determination. Unless they've identified themselves otherwise, think of them as a group of roommates rather than as one person with multiple personalities. Or a troupe putting on a show of singleness in order to make ends meet. Being invited backstage is a great act of trust — don't break it.

# Glossary of Game Terms

Before we dive into game mechanics, these are the terms used in the game.

## Player

This means what you think it means – one of you who are reading this and, hopefully, playing the game at some point. There are no gamemasters in this game, only players.

## The System

A fictional character created by all the players and played jointly between all of them. This character is a plural system, and has been set up on a date by a friend.

## Headmates

One of the members of the System's plural system. While there are as many headmates as there are players, a headmate is *not* tied to one player as “their” character.

## Date Night

This is the actual event of the blind date between the System and the Date character. It doesn't have to take place at night; you can have it happen at any time. When Date Night occurs, the Prospect character is created (or carries over from a previous date), and the roles are assigned.

## The Prospect

For any given Date Night, this is the fictional character the System has been set up with for a blind date. The Prospect has their own desires and personality, separate from those of the System.

## Roles

For Date Night, there are three roles: **The Date**, **The Fronters**, and **The Outside Interference**. These change between dates, and may change during a date as well. Roles are determined randomly at the start of Date Night.

## The Date

The player who is currently controlling the fictional actions of the Prospect character, playing their cards to help describe how the Prospect acts toward, and reacts to, the System.

## The Fronter(s)

The player or players (for a game with 4+ players) who are actively controlling the System by playing cards. With more than one Fronter, they alternate turns between each other. The Fronters roleplay the System as whichever Headmate is fronting at the time, which can change during the game.

### **The Outside Interference**

The player who is controlling “the rest of the world”, and introducing elements into the fictional Date Night to complicate the potential love connection between the System character and the Date character.

### **The Date Deck**

The deck of cards from which both the Date and the Outside Interference draw their cards.

### **The System Deck**

The deck of cards from which all the Fronters draw their cards. It’s a good idea to a System Deck with a different card back than the Date Deck, as the two will get mixed together frequently.

### **The Date Status Stacks**

A row of three cards, situated between the players, upon which they play their cards. Only the top card matters, so the Status Stacks don’t need to be laid out like solitaire game – just as three distinct piles.

### **End of the Date**

When all of the cards on the Status Stack show the same suit or the same rank, it’s time to wrap up that Date Night. The cards determine if the System and the Date share an intimate moment, want to date again, both, or neither.

### **Achieving Intimacy**

One of the two main outcomes of Date Night. “Intimacy” is a deliberately broad term, allowing this to include everything from physical sex to a long night talking about feelings, at the option of the players.

### **Getting a Second Date**

The other main outcome of Date Night. The Prospect character is willing to see the System again, and the players collectively can decide if they’d like to do that, or go on a date with someone else.

### **Aftercare**

This is another broad term, adapted from the TTRPG Safety Toolkit. It’s a recognition that even dating vicariously through a fictional character can stir up emotions, and players may need time to process those.



## Using the Cards

You need to have two decks of cards to play [52 First Dates](#).

One deck is called the *Date's Deck* and is shared between the players in the roles of the Date and the Outside Interference.

The other deck is called the *System's Deck* and is shared between players in the role of the System.

At the beginning of each Date Night, shuffle each deck and then lay out a row of three cards on the table, from the top of the Date's Deck. These are known as the *Date Status stacks*. During the course of the date, you'll play cards from your hand onto one of the stacks.<sup>7</sup>

## Your Hand

Each player, no matter which role they're playing, has a hand of five cards. The hands of the Date and the Outside Interference are drawn from the top of the Date's Deck, while the other players' hands are drawn from the System's Deck.

After you play a card, draw another card from the appropriate deck.

Instead of dice like many tabletop roleplaying games, 52 First Dates uses playing cards.

7. The two decks will end up mixed together, which is why we recommend that you use two decks with different backs – it's easier to sort out after the date!

## Matching Cards

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Two cards **match suits** if their suits are the same – such as clubs or diamonds.

These cards match suits:



Two cards **match colors** if their suits are the same color – black or red.

♣ Clubs and ♠ spades are black suits, and ♦ diamonds and ♥ hearts are red suits.

These cards match colors:



Two cards **match ranks** if their ranks are the same number or word, such as Ace, 2, or Queen.

These cards match ranks:



These cards don't match each other at all:



## Choosing a Player

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When you need to choose a player, such determining which role someone will play in a date, all players turn over a card from the top of Date's Deck. The player with the highest-ranked card is the one chosen.

To break a tie, players tied for the highest rank card draw a second card from the top of System's Deck.

# Roles and Cards

Each role has different rules for drawing and playing cards.

## The Fronters

If you're one of the Fronters, you draw your cards from the *System's Deck*. You can play a given card on a Status Stack only if the card *matches* either the suit or rank of the top card on that stack.

You play one card per turn, when your turn comes up in the turn order. In games with more than three players, at least two players will share the System role, and you alternate turns.

For example, if the Status Stacks look like this ...



... and you have these cards in your hand...



...you could play your cards on these stacks:<sup>8</sup>

	10 clubs	3 clubs	J spades
10 diamonds	yes (rank matches)	no	no
3 hearts	no	yes (rank matches)	no
4 diamonds	no	no	no
5 spades	no	no	yes (suit matches)
J clubs	yes (suit matches)	yes (suit matches)	yes (rank matches)

8. You can't play the 5 at all, since it doesn't match either the suit or the rank of a stack.



## The Date

If you're the Date, you draw your cards from the *Date's Deck*. You can play a given card on a Status Stack only if the card *does not* match the suit or rank of the top card on that stack. This is the opposite of the rules for the Fronter role.

You play one card per turn, when your turn comes up in the turn order. In games with more than three players, you will be taking turns more frequently than the players in the System role.

For example, if the Status Stacks look like this ...



... and you have these cards in your hand...



...you could play your cards on these stacks:<sup>9</sup>

10	10	3	J
10	no (rank matches)	yes	yes
3	yes	no (rank matches)	yes
4	yes	yes	yes
5	yes	yes	no (suit matches)
J	no (suit matches)	no (suit matches)	no (rank matches)

9. You can't play the at all, because it matches either the suit or the rank of the card on each stack. 

## The Outside Interference

If you're the Outside Interference, you draw your cards from the *Date's Deck*. You can play a given card on a Status Stack only if the card's **rank matches the last card played**.

You can play a card **immediately after any other player** plays a card to a stack. When you do, instead of providing dialog for a character, you introduce a complication into the scenario determined by the card you played.

For example, if the Status Stacks look like this, with the last-played card shown in red ...



... and you have these cards in your hand...



...you could play your cards on these stacks:<sup>10</sup>

	10 clubs	3 clubs	J spades
10 diamonds	no	no	no
3 hearts	no	yes (rank matches)	no
4 diamonds	no	no	no
5 spades	no	no	no
Jack clubs	no	no	no

10. It's entirely likely that you can't play a card every time you potentially could – that's by design. The Outside Interference has more opportunities to play cards than the other roles. 



You play cards onto the three Date Status stacks and describe what your character is saying or doing.

## Playing a Card

When it's your turn, you can *play* a card by laying it on one of the three Status Stacks.

Playing a card is tied to dialogue or action taken by the character you're playing – be it the System character or the Prospect character. You can describe what your character says and does and then play a card, or you can play the card first and then declare what happened.

The suit of each card determines the current demeanor of your character. Each suit can be played in generally positive way, such as being *direct or clear*, or a less positive way such as being *blunt and tactless*.

The demeanors associated with each suit are shown in the following table.

Suit	Demeanor
♣ Clubs	Direct and clear, or Blunt and tactless
♦ Diamonds	Flirty and coy, or Evasive and guarded
♥ Hearts	Earnest and heartfelt, or Thoughtless and inconsiderate
♠ Spades	Clever and witty, or Mocking and hurtful

11. *Tip!* You might want to choose the demeanor before you decide what to say, based on the cards in your hand.

You don't have to announce the exact demeanor you're using when you play the card, but should try to make it clear in the words you use or the way you describe the character's actions.

If you don't have a card of the given suit to play, then you can't take an action using that demeanor.<sup>11</sup> For example, if the player in the Date role has no ♦ Diamonds cards in their hand, then the Date character can't act in a *flirty and coy, or evasive and guarded* manner.

## You Must Play If You Can

If you're the Date or a Fronterm and you have at least one card you can play from your hand, you must play one of those cards on your turn. [12](#) [13](#)

If you're the Outside Interference, you aren't required to play cards when you have the option to do so.

## At a Loss for Words

If you're the Date or a Fronter and you *can't* legally play any cards from your hand onto the current stack, then your character is **at a loss for words**. You can describe how that character is taken aback.

If you're the Outside Interference and *another player* is at a loss for words, then you can immediately play a card from your hand on any of the cards on the Date Status stack – not just the card most recently played.

## The Outside Interference

When you're playing the Outside Interference, you don't have a turn in the turn order – you can play one of your cards any time the rank on that card matches the last card played by another player.

Instead of describing what one of the characters says, you describe an event that happens to the two characters, throwing their date into uncertain territory.

The type of event is based on the **rank of the card you play**, but you can decide the details of the event as you please.

## Responding to Outside Interference

If you're the Date or a Fronter and the player in the role of the Outside Interference plays a card on a card you just played, you have the option to play a card in response, following your normal rules playing cards.

When that happens, you also get to describe how your character reacted to the event in a way that minimized the problem.

You *aren't required* to play a card in response to Outside Interference; if you don't wish to, even if you have a card you *could* play, tell the other players that you pass.

12. This could mean you might end the date even if you don't want to. 

13. That's how dating goes sometimes ... sigh 

## Drawing New Cards

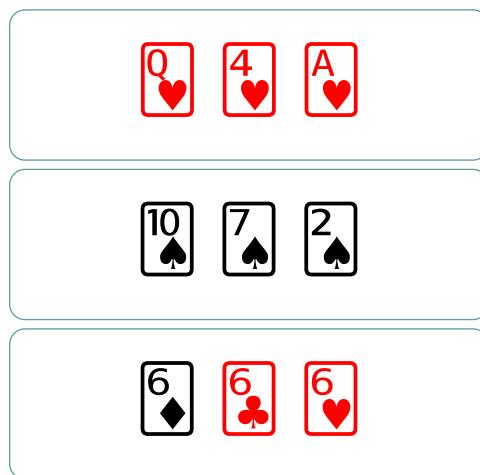
Normally, you get to draw a new card after you play one. However, if the Outside Interference plays a card, neither you nor the Outside Interference draw a replacement card until after you've either responded or passed on responding.

## Ending a Date

After someone plays a card onto one of the Status Stacks, they should check to see if a date-ending condition has happened – either all of the suits on the stack match, or all of the ranks match.

When that happens, the date moves to the resolution phase.

These are examples of Status Stacks that end the date:



## Part 1: The Set-Up

Now that you know how the cards work, we're going to tell you how the game is set up.<sup>14</sup>

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## Game Safely

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## The Meaning of Intimacy

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## Setting and Themes

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<sup>14</sup>. “the set-up” has a double meaning, see, because not only is it setting up the game, but the whole conceit of the game is that it’s a blind date that you were *set up* on 



Everyone gets in a say in the System character.

## Creating the System

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1. Name
2. Appearance -> one per player
3. Pronouns?

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## Gender and Sexuality

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## Neurodiversity, Race, and Disability

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gravida metus, at vestibulum erat augue vel ante.

## Creating the Headmates

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Once you've created the System, you need to create Headmates.

1. Write down a name or nickname for the headmate.
2. Write down pronouns for the headmate.
3. Write down a sexuality for the headmate.
4. Write down something that interests the headmate.
5. Write down the general demeanor or personality of the headmate.
6. Write down one quality the headmate is looking for in a potential partner.
7. Introduce us to this headmate.

## Part 2: Date Night

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## Determining Roles

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A date doesn't have to be fancy – you could just agree to meet in a bar, for example.

## Setting the Scene

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## Creating the Date Character

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## Personality Cards

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Let's get this party started!

## Starting the Date

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## Turn Order

- Date player plays a card
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - Date draws a card

- System player 1 plays a card
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - System player one draws a card
- Date player plays a card *4+ players only*
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - Date draws a card
- System player 2 plays a card *4+ players only*
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - System player two draws a card
- Date player plays a card *5+ players only*
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - Date draws a card
- System player 3 plays a card *6+ players only*
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - System player three draws a card
- Date player plays a card
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - Date draws a card
- System player 4 plays a card *7+ players only*
  - Outside Opposition may play a card
  - System player three draws a card
- Back to start

During the Date Night part of the game, the Date character and the System character alternate turns back and forth.

If you have more than three players, two or more players will be sharing the System character, and will take turns in alternating order.

The Outside Opposition player doesn't have a turn in the turn order, but can act in response to cards played by the other players.



## Stood Up?

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If the first three cards dealt to create the Date Status stack match, that means you've been stood up!



The Date usually wants to make a good impression.

## Playing as the Date

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## Playing the Fronter

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Likewise, the System wants to make a good impression on the Date.

## Switching Fronters

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Text messages are a great way to interrupt the perfect date.

## Playing the Outside Interference

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## Named NPCs

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est vitae ullamcorper bibendum, arcu sem gravida metus, at vestibulum erat augue vel ante.

If your date doesn't go well but you met someone else – be sure to get *their* number!

## Recurring NPCs

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## I Just Met You and This Song is Ableist

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15. The title of that song is ableist.
16. Oh c'mon Carline, you know it's a joke
17. ... an *ableist* joke.
18. She's right, you know.
19. wait, *who* is right?
20. Not you.
21. :p



Intimacy can mean different things to different couples.

## When the Date Ends

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## Date-Ending Events

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## Achieving Intimacy

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## A Second Date

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Getting ghosted is never fun, but sometimes it's for the best.

## Getting Ghosted

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This date looks like it went well.

## Playing Another Date

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## The Second Date

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  Despite the name of the game, it's entirely possible to get a second date. If the Date didn't ghost you, and the players reach consensus on going out again, play a second date (and all subsequent dates) with these changes:

- **Switch Roles** Select a new player to play the Date role, from the players who didn't play the Date. Then select another player to play the Outside Interference who hasn't played the Outside Interference in this game.
- **Keep the Date's Personality Cards** You don't have to remove them from the Date Deck, just note them down on the on the Second Date part of the Date Sheet. These serve as guidelines for roleplaying as the Date.

- **Draw Two More Personality Cards for the Date** In a second date, you're usually going to be past the initial awkwardness, and you can find out there's more to your date than you originally assumed.
- **Decide What Happened Between Dates** Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Curabitur ornare ex nisi, sit amet aliquet libero bibendum non. Curabitur sed ligula eu mi laoreet ornare. Ut tempor pretium ex. Etiam eu semper nunc, laoreet faucibus ex. Vivamus eleifend ligula facilisis laoreet convallis. Vestibulum sollicitudin, est vitae ullamcorper bibendum, arcu sem gravida metus, at vestibulum erat augue vel ante.

## Going Steady

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If the Date is up for a third date, then you are officially Going Steady.

Unless the system (or its members) are lesbians – in which case you're moving in together.



## Part 3: The Wrap-Up

It's all but required that you talk about this game once you finish it.

After a game session of [52 First Dates](#), it's very strongly recommended that you have a wrap-up discussion. Some groups might want to do this after every date, to reflect and talk about whatever issues arose.

### Aftercare

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### Topics of Discussion

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### Wait, Am I Plural?

For some people, playing [52 First Dates](#) might line up some dots in your life, and you might question whether not you might be plural yourself. Before we go any further, we want to say something very important:

*This game was not designed for helping you discover if you're plural or not.* We didn't design it that way.<sup>22</sup> [52 First Dates](#) is a simulation that might give you empathy for what it's like being plural, and reading the game materials could educate you – especially the More Than One section.

That said, if you want to investigate further, the Plural Resources appendix has a number of links that can help you learn more about the plural experience and what it might mean in your life.<sup>23</sup>

22. Among other reasons, we don't have the expertise to do so. 

23. If this game does play a role in any way determining if you're plural – or *not!* – drop us an email! 



## Variants and Hacks

This section presents alternate rules for playing [ ]{.gamename} in different ways.

There isn't a variant for using a ouija board to play 52 Second Dates ... yet.

### System to System

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### Singlet on Singlet Action

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### Queerplatonic Relationships

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You're encouraged to learn more about plurality by following these links.

## Appendix: Plural Resources

A number of resources on plurality are linked on the More Than One site. Those links, and other useful resources, are presented here for easy reference.

- Countering DID Myths by Sarah K. Reece
- Does it work? by Vickis
- Healthy Multiplicity, an extensive selves-help resource for plurality
- How do I know I'm multiple? by Sarah K. Reece
- How to Write Multi by LB Lee
- I am Mr. Robot by pluraldoxa
- I am not Sarah and Love by Sarah K. Reece
- MPD For You and Me by LB Lee
- MoreThanOne.Info by anonymous
- Non-Binary Plural: Language/Concepts for OSDD and Median Experience by cedars
- Plural Dictionary by Mala
- Our Plural Experience by Yavari of Sylvans
- Plural Etiquette Questionnaire by Hungry Ghosts
- Plurality Playbook by Freyas and Irenes
- Plurality Resource by Eclectic Tech
- Pluralpedia, the collaborative plurality dictionary, a wiki
- Quick'n'Dirty Plural History by LB Lee
- Rules of Engagement by Em, Hess, and Kerry of Sylvans
- The power of naming by Vickis

# Appendix: A Plural Lexicon

These are important terms about plural systems that you may need to understand in order to play the game. These definitions are adapted from Pluralpedia, the collaborative plurality dictionary.

**Amnesiac System** An amnesiac system is one with limited or no memory sharing. Headmates don't remember the time while other headmates are fronting and may experience this gap as time loss.

**Blending** Blending is when the boundary between headmates becomes blurred, and it can be hard to tell them apart, or even who is present. This can happen to the active fronters, or to anyone else who is co-conscious at the time.

**Blurian** Blurian refers to easier or complete memory sharing, having a lack of significant amnesic barriers. This term is usually paired with other terms to describe a system, and itself has no correlation to the identities within the given system.

Blurian is usually paired up with the terms median or multiple, in contrast to partitionary, to indicate both the distinction of system members and memory sharing.

**Co-Conscious** Co-conscious (also called "co-aware") refers to when multiple headmates are active at once. This is distinct from co-fronting in that these headmates aren't necessarily fronting, they may be in headspace or otherwise experiencing the outside world such as through internal communication.

**Co-Fronting** Co-fronting is when two or more headmates are fronting. This can result in them having to coordinate actions, or for their personalities to blend together.

**Core** The core is a headmate with a direct connection to the body's pre-plural self. Not every system has one, and not every system had a point at which they were not plural. The core often inherits the personality, identity, and/or memories of the pre-plural self.

**Endogenic** Endogenic is an umbrella term that refers to all systems that are not completely traumagenic in origin, it encompasses many experiences. It is often seen as the opposite to the pathologized views of plurality, although can exist in harmony, even within the same system.

**Fronting** Fronting is an activity performed by one or more headmates, where they take control of the body and handle daily activities and communication. This can often include allowing other headmates to speak via internal communication. In some cases, it's possible for no one to be fronting, in which case some type of default behavior takes over the body. This can surface in multiple ways, such as becoming unresponsive.

**Frontstuck** A headmate is frontstuck when they are in front and unable to leave. More than one headmate may be stuck at once.

**Front Trigger** Front triggers are the people, places, things, ideas, and scenarios that may cause a system member to front or be drawn near the front. These can be both negative and positive.

**Forced Fronting** Forced fronting is when one headmate takes front against the will of others in the system. This is not the same as frontstuck as the headmate is not unable to leave front; they simply don't want to.

**Headmate** A headmate is a singular person or entity in a plural system or collective. They can be clearly separated (like in DID or OSDD-1b, called a multiple or partitionary system) or more blurry and fluid (like in median or OSDD-1a).

**Headspace** A headspace (also known as inner world or wonderland) is a place that members of a system can visit or inhabit, where they can talk to other headmates. Not every system has one, but many do. It is also not unique to systems. Singlets may have a headspace as well.

**Host** A host is the headmate who is most active, most responsible for day-to-day activities, or otherwise is fronting most often. Not all systems have hosts, and some may have a rotating team for the role. In addition, some do not like the term "host", and choose to use alternatives; specifically, outernaut.

**Introject** Introjects are headmates who have an original source that their personality, identity, and memories may be based partially or fully on. They can join a system for any number of reasons: having similar traumas to an individual, seeing strengths in the individual that the collective would benefit from, etc.



The term can be considered medical terminology and as such may not be used by every system. It should be checked first if a system is comfortable being referred to as such or not.

**Little** A little is a headmate that behaves or otherwise feels like they are a young age. This often approximately caps at age twelve, but may vary personally between systems based on their body's age.

**Main** The main is a headmate who is considered by the rest of the system to be one the main or central influences on the system. This doesn't necessarily mean they front often. A main can be a leader, teacher, or another authoritative figure that has an influence over the system. They may also be someone that others draw energy from.

**Median** A median system (also called midcontinuum) is a system where members are not as distinct or separate from each other. It can be considered being somewhere between multiple and singlet.

Some are dependent on a single individual, or the dependence can be mutual in that there is no central individual. Some median systems feel more blurred between themselves. Others may also be based around a shared identity or kin.

The entities which inhabit a median system are known as "aspects" or "facets". Some median systems may identify as different archetypes. Despite being more fluid and similar, median systems can be very diverse.

Median is often used as opposed to multiple, where members in a multiple system are distinct.

**Memory Sharing** Memory sharing is a system function whereby headmates can share their own memories with others in the same system. This may happen automatically or may require deliberate

These are just a handful of the terms used by plural people to describe our experiences. Different systems, or even different members of the same systems, might use different terminology.

action by headmates. Not all systems have memory sharing and those that do may have it to varying degrees.

**Mixed Origin** Mixed origin refers to a system that has multiple different system origins. This could be because their system formed from a combination of factors, or that not all of their headmates are of the same origin.

**Multiple** A multiple system is the state of being more than one entity in one physical body where the identities of headmates are more distinct. The term is sometimes used as opposed to median, where distinction between system members is less distinct than with a multiple system.

**Parogenetic** Parogenetic refers to systems or headmates that were created using thought-based or metaphysical means, usually deliberately. Tulpamancy is a related concept, but the term is avoided by some systems due to its origins or other reasons. Similarly, parogenetic may be avoided by some systems in favor of tulpmancy/tulpgenic.

**Partitionary** A partitionary system is one where the divisions between headmates are particularly solidly defined. This may include other attributes, like lack of memory sharing, lack of internal communication, or lack of co-consciousness and resulting time loss. Systems may become more or less partitionary over time. It is also possible for different headmates to have different levels of partitioning from the rest of the system or subsystem.

**Persecutor** A persecutor is a headmate who acts harmfully towards other system members, the body, or to others. This is usually out of a misguided attempt to protect the system. Persecutors often hold internalized trauma and act in reaction to it, and the harm they cause may be unintentional. This can include aligning with abusers, engaging in self-harm or suicidal behaviors, abusing drugs, lashing out, etc.

**Plurality** Plurality is the state of having multiple headmates collectively sharing a single body. Plural experiences are extremely diverse. Systems may be spiritual in nature or secular, median or partitionary, small systems or ones with thousands of headmates.

**Pluralphobe** A pluralphobe is someone, typically a singlet, who actively seeks to remove systems and open plurality from their lives, for any number of reasons.

**Protector** A protector is a headmate whose role is to protect other members of the system from external harm, traumatic memories, harmful members of the system, or other threats.

**Quoigenic** Quoigenic is an origin term that means the user does not want to share their origins, does not think it's relevant, or thinks it's the wrong question to ask. It's derived from the French word "quoi", which approximately means "what".

**Role** A role is the position a member takes within their system. This can be something with a specific focus such as a protector or a gatekeeper, or more of a general purpose such as a primary fronter.

**Singlet** Singlet refers to a person who isn't plural, or in other words doesn't share their body with anyone else. It's not a binary distinction, as people may be questioning being plural, and median can be viewed as a continuum with singlet at one end.

**Switching** Switching is when the current fronter(s) of the system changes. This can vary between something that happens constantly, or by accident, to something that requires much effort or happens only once a day or once a week. The experience of what switching is like also varies between systems. Switching can also take varying amounts of time, which can sometimes result in blend states in the in-between time.

**System** A system is the collection of people and entities, often called headmates, that share a single physical plural body. The experiences of plural systems are very diverse, and every system is different.

Systems often have a dedicated name, separate from the body's or members' names. It's common for systems to have names that are more like titles than given names, such as being named after flowers, or cosmic themes, with adjectives applied.

**System Exclusionist** A system exclusionist is an individual or system that holds strict beliefs about plurality and enforces those ideas on others, often in relation to causation. 'Sysmed' or 'sysmedicalist' is a synonym that refers in particular to systems that apply outdated and misapplied medical ideas about plurality.

**Traumagenic** Traumagenic refers to a system whose creation/origin is the result of one or more traumatic events. Often, these systems have lingering trauma, and may fall under a diagnosis like DID or OSDD-1.

**Tulpamancy** Tulpamancy is the art of purposefully creating headmates through various techniques. A headmate created in this way is called a “tulpa”. A tulpamancer is a practitioner of tulpmancy. Parogenic is a related concept, but the term may be avoided by some systems in favor of tulpmancy/tulpgenic or tuplamancy/tuplgenic. Similarly, tulpmancy/tulpgenic or tuplamancy/tuplgenic may be avoided by some systems in favor of parogenic.

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## 52 First Dates System Sheet

Here's the system sheet.

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## 52 First Dates Outside Interference

Here's the outside interference sheet.

## 52 First Dates Headmate Sheet

here's the headmate sheet.

## 52 First Dates Date Sheet

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## 52 First Dates Game Reference

Here's the reference sheet.