

## Establishing Online Dating Relationships: Safety First

Online dating can be fun. But don't neglect safety and common sense when you try to hook up with a mate. At minimum, take caution in the following areas.

### Protect Your Computer

Take care of your equipment and systems before you head out into the Internet realm. You need to have a firewall and anti-virus protection for your email and for when you search websites and interact online. At the bare minimum, you may want these two solutions that are offered at no charge to home computer users (i.e. not for commercial use):

Free Firewall Download: ZoneAlarm [www.zonelabs.com](http://www.zonelabs.com)

Free Anti-Virus Download: AVG Anti-Virus [www.grisoft.com](http://www.grisoft.com)

### Protect Yourself

Take care of yourself, too, by choosing appropriate dating sites. Seek and choose a reputable online dating service. How? Begin by asking around with friends, neighbors, co-workers and others you may know who have tried online dating, and see which places they recommend. In addition, search "online dating services" and keep a notebook of their URLs or website links, the fees, rules and regulations, complete contact information of each and any other useful information that spikes your interest. Then compare each place. Try only those places where you feel safe. Avoid the others.

So take care. Arm your computer - and yourself- with the correct tools and knowledge!

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