

The perfect shot at finding love

When it comes to looking for love, it seems a picture really does speak a thousand words. And choosing the best online dating photos can be the difference between finding love and finding a dud, according to new research by eharmony.

Psychologist and relationship expert Sharon Draper says when choosing a profile photo, singles should consider exactly what message they wish to deliver and how it reflects them as an individual.

“It is important to choose a photo in which you feel good about yourself and appear confident. Coming across as being comfortable in your own skin and who you are as a person goes a long way,” Sharon says.

“It is also a good idea to keep it simple and not get too creative – for instance, a classic selfie in which you are smiling and friendly is very appealing.”

According to eharmony research, being photographed with a furry friend was the most likely to get you a date (16 per cent) among both men and women. Meanwhile, a classic selfie (13 per cent) was the second most attractive option for women, as was wearing sunglasses for men (14 per cent).

Women who were photographed smiling (10 per cent) were also considered desirable, and being photographed with a baby or child improved dateability (11 per cent) for men, the study found.

But it pays to keep the clothes on, with bare-chested profile shots of men proving the biggest turn off (42 per cent), while straight on headshots were deemed the least desirable profile pic for women (14 per cent).

Photographer Zara King says a good profile photograph should capture your personality, while representing you in the best light.

“When taking your photo, ensure you use a quality camera for crisp photos without any blurriness,” Zara says.

“And you don’t want it to look staged or fake. Always try and take the photo in natural light, and ensure the background is well lit but does not dominate the image.”

Zara says it is also important to dress to impress.

“Choose an outfit that you look good in and you feel comfortable in. When posing, choose an angle that feels natural and you are confident about – if you feel awkward, your image will convey that,” Zara says.

“Authenticity is really important too. Using filters on photos is usually a big no-go as they distort your facial features and make it seem like you have something to hide. Not only that, but you end up falling into the ‘uncanny valley’ a bit if you’re not careful, and don’t make that human connection,” Zara continues.

But while a person’s physical appearance plays a key role when it comes to looking for love, their personality and core values are also important, Sharon says.

“Finding the right partner can seem like a daunting task,” Sharon says.

“But when searching for a meaningful relationship, there is more to compatibility than just physical appearance,” Sharon says.

“You should also be able to talk to each other with ease and comfort, share similar goals and dreams and have the same values in life.”

Sharon says this is where eharmony’s Compatibility Matching System (CMS) can help potential partners push past looks alone. The CMS has already done the bulk of the work in creating a bank of matches for each person, based on 18 dimensions of compatibility, including core values and individual personality traits.

“eharmony helps do some of the hard work for you, helping to create matches based on your values and personality, but your profile photo is the next step in helping find a candidate for a serious and meaningful relationship,” Sharon says.

“Just remember – a picture can say a lot about a person, so be mindful of the image you put out for yourself and think about what they say about you as a person.”

Key findings:

Table 1: Profile photos most likely to get you a date

WOMEN			MEN		
Rank	Scenario	Percentage including in favourites	Rank	Scenario	Percentage including in favourites
1	Holding a dog	16%	1	Holding a dog	16%
2	Selfie	13%	2	Wearing sunglasses	14%
3	Smiling	10%	3	Picture with a baby	11%
4	Doing chores	9%	4	Smiling	10%
5	Cropped close to face	8%	5	Cropped close to face	10%
6	In nature	6%	6	Doing chores	8%
7	Heavily filtered	6%	7	In nature	4%

8	Wearing sunglasses	3%	8	Sporty picture	4%
9	In a bar with a drink	3%	9	Selfie	4%

Table 2: Profile photos most likely to put someone off dating you

WOMEN			MEN		
Rank	Scenario	Percentage including among least favourites	Rank	Scenario	Percentage including among least favourite
1	Headshot straight on	14%	1	Bare chested photo	42%
2	Sporty picture	12%	2	Heavily filtered	10%
3	Not smiling	12%	3	Picture with someone of opposite gender	6%
4	Heavily filtered	11%	4	Picture with a group of friends	5%
5	Picture with someone of opposite gender	8%	5	Sporty picture	4%
6	Picture with a baby	8%	6	Holding a dog	4%
7	Picture with a group of friends	6%	7	Full body shot	4%
8	Holding a dog	4%	8	Picture with a baby	4%
9	Picture with someone else blurred out	3%	9	In nature	3%

NB: Where photos appear in both top and bottom lists, this indicates that they divide opinion, as each respondent chose the top three photos that would make them more likely to go on a date with someone, and the three photos that would make them **less** likely to do so.

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