

OFF CAMPUS

Has online dating made the pursuit of relationships easier?

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Whether it's through a dedicated app, or just sliding into social media DMs, it's undeniable that online dating has completely changed the dating scene. Dating apps promise us a brave new world of romance, where the indignity of being rejected to your face is no longer a risk. Now, you can meet your potential soulmate in your pyjamas, right in the middle of the third rewatch of your favourite sitcom. Modern romance is just a funny thing.

However, it has been made easier. It's easier to meet people, strike up a conversation, and even ghost people with vague excuses. While the mechanics of dating are literally at our fingertips, the actual connection feels more elusive than ever.

The matchmaking aspect about dating apps starts with the swiping: the endless, dopamine-fuelled scroll of faces. Every ding of a match becomes a small reminder that you're still in the running – still likeable, interesting, and worth noticing. Conversely, every match hinges on a description of just a few words that's carefully curated to be funny but not trying too hard.

The irony is that swiping turns into a mutual eligibility screening: you only swipe right if you think someone's cool enough for you, then wait nervously to see if the feeling is mutual. Subconsciously, however, it becomes more of a test to see if someone's in your league, instead of wanting to talk to someone because you're interested (which is supposed to be the point).

It's an endless ego slot machine. Nonetheless, very rarely does that match turn into a conversation that goes anywhere. When dating becomes an exercise in ego maintenance, it stops being about another person and starts being only about yourself. It's also like a brutally honest mirror: one swipe and you compare yourself to meticulously curated profiles. What this leads to is a pattern where everyone else seems more put-together, more attractive, and maybe even more "dateable".

Even worse, this whole setup has kind of messed with our social instincts. Once upon a time, we had to talk to each other face-to-face, making eye-contact and small talk. Now, we skip straight to weirdly invasive questions as icebreakers. And while convenience is great, we've lost a little of that charming awkwardness that makes dating human. Putting in effort to spark the initial conversation



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

with butterflies in your stomach is part of the charm of romance.

Of course, an obvious perspective is that people on dating apps are different than in real life. Texting on screen is not always the same thing as talking to someone in person; you might form a connection to the personality that's texting you funny things but is completely different when you decide to meet. It can also be the other way around when someone is much easier to connect to in real life than on an app.

That said, let's give credit where it's due. Online dating is a lifesaver for people who are shy, busy, or just aren't too extroverted. It's also strangely romantic that two people can find each other through the power of algorithms. Since dating apps use algorithms to match people with common interests, it also has a higher probability of better compatibility, which probably explains the dating app

success stories every now and then.

But the downside can be daunting, which materialises through "option paralysis". This is a phenomenon where there are so many people to choose from, it's tempting to keep swiping in search of the next best thing. This makes actual commitment harder because no matter how great someone is, it's still superficial when we keep looking for something better.

So has online dating made dating easier?

If by "easier," we mean more accessible, slightly addictive, and occasionally bizarre, then it definitely has.

Even with all that's shrouding online dating, we still swipe, try, and hope for that one match who makes it all feel a little less like a game. And since there are successful stories, I would say the chance of finding love is beautiful enough to give it a try. At the end of the day, human beings are wired for connection. If nothing else, there's a different experience that comes out of it.

NEW TO ONLINE DATING? Remember these four things

Protect your personal information

Never share your full address, financial details, or work location early on. Scammers often ask for sensitive data under false pretenses.

Watch for inconsistencies

If someone's story keeps changing or feels too dramatic or perfect, it may be a red flag. Pay attention to gaps, odd language, or evasive answers.

Never send money

No matter how convincing the story, never send money

to someone you have met online. Romance scams often involve fake emergencies.

Verify their identity

Use video calls early in the conversation. A real person will be open to a face-to-face chat. Even if video isn't possible, a voice call can help you gauge someone's tone, reactions, and sincerity. Also, ask them for their social media handles. Most real people have at least one active social media account and should be open to share that information if they have nothing to hide.

