

Facebook Dating lets you seek romance on the social network: Is privacy a concern?

September 6 2019, by Edward C. Baig, Usa Today



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Are you ready to friend Cupid on Facebook?

On Thursday, the world's largest social network announced the launch of

Facebook Dating in the U.S., adding a fertile market to a service that is already available in 19 other countries.

More than 200 million people list themselves as single on Facebook, and while not each and every one of them is seeking a meaningful relationship or even a short-term fling, the sheer numbers would suggest the potential for sparking romance.

But you would also expect many unattached people to remain reticent, especially since Facebook doesn't exactly have the most stellar reputation when it comes to privacy and security.

There's also the question of just how many singles among the younger demographic will look to a service some will identify as their parents' scene, not theirs.

Here's how Facebook Dating works and how the social network is addressing these issues.

Protecting privacy

For starters, you must be 18 or older and opt into Facebook Dating. While you'll need to be a Facebook member and download the latest version of the Facebook app, Facebook Dating will live in its own dedicated space, with your dating [profile](#) kept separate from your main Facebook profile. All your dating activity will be also be kept apart from your Facebook profile or news feed unless you choose to share it there.

That said, you must use your first name as it appears on Facebook inside Facebook Dating, as well as your real location and age. It's up to you whether you want to share other details, including your gender identity, pictures and so on.

Once set up, Facebook will suggest possible matches from other people who have opted in, based on your interests, preferences and the other things you do on Facebook. Unlike, say, Tinder, you don't swipe in either direction to express interest in a person or to dismiss them. Instead, you can tap a Like button in Facebook Dating or comment directly on the person's profile.

You might even use a picture as a conversation starter, with Facebook even suggesting photos and information from your Facebook profile you may want to use, though you maintain the ability to reject such suggestions.

To protect someone who has no interest in the person wooing them, a user may only send a single message until, and only if, the object of their affection responds.

If the person does respond but later determines you're a creep, he or she can block you and report inappropriate behavior to Facebook.

Hooking up with your secret crush

If you're cool with it, Facebook will potentially match you with friends of friends, otherwise just people you don't know. It won't though match you with your actual Facebook friends, unless you and that other person choose each other as part of a Secret Crush feature added last spring in those other Facebook Dating markets.

As part of the feature, you can select up to nine of your Facebook friends or Instagram followers with whom you would like to be, well, more than just friends. If that person has opted into Facebook Dating, they'll receive a notification that someone has a crush on them.

If that crush happens to add you to their own Secret Crush list, it's a

match. If your crush isn't on Facebook Dating, doesn't create a Secret Crush list or doesn't put you on their list, no one will know that you've entered their name, eliminating, in theory anyway, the fear of rejection.

Facebook will let you add your Instagram posts to your Facebook Dating profile, as well, which may help attract a younger crowd.

Coming soon, Facebook also plans to let you share your Facebook or Instagram Stories to, as the company puts it, "help you show, rather than tell, who you are."

Another option lets you choose to see other people who are using Facebook Dating that fit your preferences within the groups you are part of and the events you have attended or will be attending. Should you choose to see these people, they'll be able to see you, too.

As an additional safeguard, you can share details of your upcoming date and/or live location with someone you trust via Facebook Messenger.

"We're committed to protecting people's privacy within Facebook Dating so that we can create a place where people feel comfortable looking for a date and building meaningful romantic relationships," says Erin Egan, Facebook's vice president and chief privacy officer.

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Citation: Facebook Dating lets you seek romance on the social network: Is privacy a concern? (2019, September 6) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2019-09-facebook-dating-romance-social-network.html>

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