

Tips for Autistic adults using dating apps

Dating apps can create real opportunities to meet people, but they can also be challenging. These tips, informed by our research, are designed to help you use apps in ways that feel safer, less stressful, and more effective.



Getting started

Choose the right platform: Different apps are often used for different purposes — some are more geared towards casual hook-ups, while others are better for long-term relationships. Spend a little time researching which apps best match what you're looking for. You could:

- Check the app's website or description in the app store to see how it presents itself and who it is designed for.
- Read independent reviews (e.g. on comparison websites, blogs or YouTube) that summarise the pros and cons of each app.
- Ask trusted friends or peers about their experiences with different apps.
- Look at online communities (such as Reddit or forums) where people share their experiences.
- Explore apps created specifically for Autistic (e.g. Hiki) or disabled people (e.g. Spoony, Wable), as these may offer features or communities that feel safer or more supportive.

Taking these steps can help you choose an app that feels like the best fit for your goals, values and comfort level.

Match your goals to the app: Some apps are commonly used for casual encounters, while others are more focused on long-term relationships. LGBTQIA+ or neurodivergent-specific apps may also feel safer or more supportive.

Know what you want: Before you start, think about whether you're looking for: a long-term partner, short-term dating, casual connections or friendships.

"Know what it is that you're looking for, be really clear about you know what a relationship looks like for you and have actually done some work around that before you set foot on it, because it's the wild west out there."



Communicating online

Take your time: Apps let you communicate by text so give yourself time to think before responding.

Set boundaries early: Decide what kinds of conversations you're comfortable with and stop if someone makes you feel uneasy.

Pace yourself: Apps can feel like a part-time job. Limit how much time you spend on them to avoid burnout.

"Yeah, yeah. If I'm not careful, I'll get on Bumble and scroll a bunch of people, and then too many people will try and talk to me, and then I'll be overwhelmed."

Deciding whether to disclose autism

Think about timing: Many people don't disclose that they are Autistic in their profile but choose to share later, when trust has been built.

Weigh the pros and cons: Disclosure can help filter for supportive partners and avoid misunderstandings, but it can also risk stigma or rejection.

"... and knowing myself enough to go well, if somebody can't deal with that, I'd rather not ever match with them in the first place, you know."

Use indirect strategies: Some people prefer to hint at their Autistic identity through their profile (e.g. sharing passions or neurodivergent-related interests) before disclosing explicitly.

Share in your own way: If you do disclose, phrase it in a way that feels authentic and comfortable for you.

Read more about disclosure: aspect.org.au/disclosure

Staying safe

Watch for red flags: Be cautious of people who pressure you for personal information, sexual messages or to meet quickly.

Use in-app safety tools: Block, mute or report people who make you feel unsafe.

Meet safely: When meeting in person, choose a public place and let a friend or family member know where you'll be.

Get a second opinion: If you're unsure about someone's behaviour, talk it through with a trusted friend, peer or mentor before continuing contact.

Looking after yourself

Expect ups and downs: Ghosting, rejection and mixed responses are common for everyone who uses dating apps. These experiences are not a reflection of your worth and they're not unique to being Autistic — they're part of online dating in general.

"You're going to come across people that are weird, people that are great, if someone ghosts, you don't take it personally. Just roll with it. You know, unmatched and move on."

Balance effort with rest: Take breaks from apps when you need to recharge.

Seek support: Having trusted people you can check in with can make online dating feel safer and more manageable. They can help check profiles for red flags, talk through tricky situations, or build your confidence for first meetings.

"Some of my friends will say give me your phone and like, let me see how I can help you reply. And I don't take it in a bad way, its more like them helping me, which is more like a fun thing."

Use app features wisely: Make use of safety reminders, reporting functions, and conversation tools available within the apps.

Consider using tools: Some people find it helpful to draft messages with a friend or use AI writing assistants to check tone or suggest replies. This can reduce stress and help you feel more confident when chatting online.



Remember, apps are just one option for meeting potential partners. Dating apps can open doors, but they're not for everyone. Many people find it easier and more enjoyable to meet potential partners through in-person activities, like joining social or hobby groups, volunteering, or connecting through community events. Exploring both online and offline options can give you more chances to meet people in ways that feel safe and comfortable.