

How to Find a Partner

By roo-roo

A few people have asked me to share the content of the class I taught recently on attracting a partner. Some of this advice is very obviously directly related to finding a partner, while other bits are things that will less directly have an impact on the search. Whether you're looking for a long-term relationship, casual play, or something else entirely, it's all relevant in some way.

If you're new

- Pat yourself on the back. Getting into the community can be an intimidating first step. Just getting out from behind the computer and out to events is an important part of the process.
- If you're a lioness hunting a zebra, you don't hope to randomly stumble across a zebra. You go to the watering hole where the zebras congregate. This community (and this website) are those watering holes.

Know yourself

- To prepare for a job interview, you shower, put on a suit or other appropriate business-y clothes, make sure they're clean and not wrinkled, bring your resumé, research the company, prepare for questions you think you'll be asked, turn your phone off, etc. This is a lot of preparation because a job is roughly 40 hours a week. That's a big commitment. If you're looking for a long-term relationship where you'll end up living together, how many hours a week will that relationship entail? A lot more than 40. Yet how many people don't prepare as much for that relationship as they do for the job interview?
- Knowing what you're into is hard when you're new. Introspection and exploration can help, but they take time. This isn't an overnight process. Even after years or decades of being active in BDSM, you'll still be learning new things.
- A good starting point in finding your interests is this: What do you think about when you masturbate? Those are the things you may want to consider exploring.
- Do you want to give up (or take) control? In what context? Bedroom only? Or throughout the relationship? Would you prefer to avoid this entirely and stick to sensation only? There are no wrong answers to these questions. The answers are also not permanent. They may change over time.
- BDSM is a buffet. You can sample as many different things as you like as often as you like. If you don't like something, spit it out. You don't have to like everything at the buffet, and you don't have to try everything either.

In general (online and in-person)

- Don't lie about your experience level. You'll get found out sooner or later.
- Don't think that you've got a ton of experience just because you've read a lot about BDSM, talked in chat rooms, or "served" someone online. Real-time experience is far different.

- Don't address people by titles unless you've negotiated that. You didn't earn the right to call them by that title. Likewise, you didn't earn the right for this person who you've never met to call you by a title.
- The people you meet are people, not fetish delivery systems. That person you're talking to may be a mother, an EMT, a diabetic, a volunteer, and many other things. People are multifaceted. Focusing on just this one aspect of their identity is bad form.
- Don't lead with the fetish. Yes, this is a special-interest group, but that doesn't mean you can talk about someone's sex life with them straight away. If you join a mountain bike group, it's perfectly acceptable to start off with your common interest and ask about where they ride, what kind of bike they have, and other similar questions. However, BDSM is far more intimate and personal.
- If you're not sure how to refer to someone, just ask. This goes for gender as well as d/s orientation- slave, sub, bottom, etc.
- Take no for an answer. "No" doesn't mean, "If you try harder you can talk me into it." Don't keep pestering them. Don't flip out and start insulting someone who shoots you down. People talk to each other, and word will spread.
- Improve yourself. There are myriad ways to do this, both physically and mentally. Learn about your BDSM interests through classes, talking with other kinksters, and reading. Start chipping away at your flaws. If you're not sure where to start, ask some close friends what they would improve about you, or what they think may be holding you back from finding a partner. When you finally do meet that person who is a terrific match for you, you want them to say, "Wow!"
- Have your shit together. You're an adult.

Online part 1: your profile

- No cock shots as main profile pictures. If you see someone in a coffee shop or bar, walk over to them, smile, and plop your dick down on the table, do you think that would be an effective tactic? If it doesn't work in person, why would you think it would work online?
- No question mark as a profile picture. This reeks of laziness. If you don't want to show your face, that's perfectly fine. But try put up something, whether it's a shot of you with your face obscured or a partial-face pic. There are a lot of ways to do this and make it look good.
- No overabundance of naked pictures or nearly identical pictures. "Overabundance" is the key word here. "Now here's a shot of my tits from a slightly different angle! And here's one of them from the opposite angle! And one from three degrees to the left!" Try putting up some shots of you with clothes on, candid, or activity shots. If you like horseback riding, how about a shot of you on a horse?
- Screen names like footlover84 or cuckoldmenow make people think you're all about that one thing and that you have no other interests at all.
- Say non-kinky things in your "about me" section. What's important to you? What do you do in your spare time? What kind of music do you like?
- Be honest about what you want in your profile, whether it's a relationship, casual sex, casual play, friends-with-benefits, or anything else.

- Keep your fetish list short. If someone is interested in playing with you, they'll get frustrated trying to pick through thousands of things listed trying to weed out duplicates and joke fetishes.
- "Dominate" is a verb. There is no such thing as "a dominate". The word you're looking for here is "dominant".

Online part 2: messaging

- Don't copy/paste messages. It's lazy and obvious.
- Message someone before sending them a friend request.
- Say why you're messaging, not just "hey". Put some effort into it. "You're hot" doesn't count either.
- Use actual words, not textspeak. U and R are letters, not words.
- Use proper grammar. You should've learned this in elementary school. While your messages don't have to be high-end literature, they shouldn't be painful to read either.
- Punctuation is your friend. Use it.
- Apply a sniper approach rather than a shotgun approach. Be more selective in who you message, and aim your shots carefully; take time constructing the message unique to that person. Don't just blindly aim your messages at anyone you find attractive.
- Read the profile before messaging.
- Read the profile before messaging.
- Read the profile before messaging.
- READ THE FUCKING PROFILE!!!

In person

- Hygiene is important. Bathe. Wear clean clothes.
- Put more effort into it than just throwing on a pair of sweat pants and a dirty, stained t-shirt. This may be acceptable for going to class in college, but it will hurt your chances here. If money is an issue, thrift stores often have terrific offerings for cheap.
- Be polite. It goes a long way and makes you look classier.
- Don't assume power exchange. Don't call someone by a title unless you both agreed to it. Just because that other person is submissive, that doesn't mean they're your submissive. This goes for dominants too.
- Learn to read body language. There are countless websites, books, and online videos out there. Acquiring this knowledge will help you to not come across as creepy since you can more easily react to others' actions.
- When meeting someone privately, be safe. There has been a ton written on this, and it's more than enough to make another complete writing on. The short version is to use a reliable safe call, check references, meet somewhere public, watch your drink, and trust your instincts.

At munches, play events, demos, and parties

- Don't touch people or their things without permission, even if you see other people doing it.
- You get what you put in. If you sit in a corner with your head down, you're going to have a bad time and not meet anyone. Get out there and engage. If you walk over to a group of people at a munch who are standing in a circle, they'll usually open up for you and squeeze you right in.
- Talk to people who aren't "useful" to you. For example, if you go to an event and only talk to the submissive women, people will see right through that and start avoiding you because what you're after is obvious.
- When talking to someone you're interested in, don't just focus on kink. Find out who they are as a person.
- Some people hug, others don't. Still others may hug, but only after having met you a few times. Offering a handshake is usually best for people you just met.
- Just because you see others doing something with someone else, that doesn't mean it's ok for you to do it. Chances are when you see that, they've negotiated that or have an established dynamic. If you walk up to someone and touch them in a way that's sexual or BDSM-ish without negotiating first, you're going to get kicked out of that event and possibly earn a trip to the ER.
- Keep the booze under control. If you can't handle it, don't do it. This doesn't mean you shouldn't ever drink at munches; it means that if you're drunk and 99% of the people there are sober, you're going to make an ass of yourself.
- Give people space. Don't crowd their scenes. Give them more room than you think necessary. Otherwise, you may end up getting flogged in the face.
- Be quiet in play areas. Keep it to a whisper. If you feel the need to have a prolonged conversation, take it to a social area.
- Don't loudly express shock. Some people play hard, and some people enjoy styles of play that aren't to everyone's tastes. If you're concerned, find a dungeon monitor or the host of the party.
- When asking someone to play, accept it if they say no. You will get shot down sometimes. Don't take it personally. But if you keep getting shot down consistently, there's obviously some room for improvement; use that opportunity to find out what went wrong and change it for the future.
- Be conscious of others' wounds or marks when hugging. That person may have just done some needle play, cutting, or other intense play. They may be very sore.
- When asking someone to play, try framing it up as a statement rather than a question. Instead of, "Do you want to kick me in the balls?", a better approach might be, "If you're interested in playing tonight, I'll be here until about 1." That way, the default answer is no. They don't have to feel guilty or make excuses for saying no. Even if they decide not to play with you, they'll have a pleasant memory of how you didn't make them feel awkward in asking. If any of their friends ask them about you, they'll have something nice to say about you.

Some of this advice is very scene-etiquette oriented. It's designed to not creep people out and help build a solid reputation, both of which will serve you well in trying to find a partner.