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When planning your first date locale, grabbing a simple cup of joe at a trendy spot could be the key to success.



According to a 2006 national dating survey of more than 300 singles by Strategy One, 90 percent of singles feel more relaxed having a first date at a familiar location. The survey also found that many of the singles (42%) prefer to keep the encounter brief, and almost one-third (32%) look for a place that makes it easy to end the date quickly.

If you don't have a favorite coffee shop in mind, ask friends and family if they have one they'd recommend. You might want to go online to a site like Citysearch (<http://www.citysearch.com/world>) where you can search coffee houses in your area and read honest reviews about the location's atmosphere.

Coffeehouses aren't all the same, though. Depending on your preferences, you might want one with a quiet setting, board games, or live music. Here are some of the benefits of going to each of these.

No-frills coffee shop

Benefits of going here

This location will likely be peaceful, a great atmosphere where you can talk and actually hear your date's answers. If you like to find out as much as possible about your love interest in a simple setting, this is the ideal place to go.

Why it might not work

If you and your date can't find much to talk about, and those painfully awkward silences are getting longer, there's nothing to do but watch the barista wipe down the tables.

Coffee shop with games

Benefits of going here

Some coffee shops have board games or playing cards on hand for customer use. This is a fun and playful way to get to know your date better. If your date is willing to play a game, practice a little flirting over the friendly competition.

Why it might not work

If your date is very competitive and a sore loser/winner, it could ruin the date. But, hey, at least you'll know this quality early in the relationship and you can decide for yourself if this is the person for you.

Coffee shop with live music

Benefits of going here

Music provides entertainment and a distraction and gives you something to talk about right away. Call ahead to find out what kind of music will be performed the night/day you'll be visiting the shop.

Why it might not work

The music might be too loud or it could be something you and your date are not enjoying. The coffee shop could be crowded if it's a popular local performer and there might not be enough places to sit. Call the shop before you set up the date to find out if there's a musician who's more popular than others and if they suggest you should get to the location 30 minutes before they start performing.

The Coffee Shop Menu

You can find out about a person's personality and likes quickly by the way they take their beverage:

- If she orders black coffee with a splash of non-fat milk and no sweeteners, she could be a no-fuss woman who likes routine, or she may be watching her weight.
- Did he order a caramel or chocolate-flavored something or other with whipped cream on top? You've got a man on your hands that's not afraid to show his softer side—or his sweet tooth.
- Herbal tea drinkers may be calmer, more health-minded individuals. Or they could be someone who has so much natural energy that caffeine could send them over the edge.

Order a dessert or two to share and find out your date's preferences. If you decide to join them for date two, bring something to show you were paying attention to your date's tastes. Did her eyes light up at the triple slice of chocolate cake? Pick up a few chocolate truffles to share the next time you get together. Did he wolf down that peanut butter cookie like the cookie monster was coming? Bring him a pack of Reese's Pieces or a Peanut Butter cup as a sweet way to end your next date.