

The scientist's guide to dating

Researchers are discovering that there are all sorts of chemical and behavioural things that govern the laws of attraction. Translating some of these discoveries into your own love life may make the difference between butterflies or cramps in your date's tummy:

- Wear red. It's no random coincidence that red is the colour of love and attraction. There have been a number of social and psychological studies which show that men and women are more attractive when they wear red.
- Sweat. Prepare for a dinner date or an important morning meeting by going to gym first. According to dermatologists, even one workout will increase the blood flow to your skin, giving you a healthy glow. Just don't forget to shower afterwards.
- Learn a good joke. Both men and women find a sense of humour attractive. Just remember to keep it tasteful.
- Put Mother Nature to work. Hide the evidence of overwork with a slice or two of cucumber. The popular cucumber-on-eye technique uses the vegetable's anti-inflammatory properties to reduce red, puffy eyelids.

A gathering body of evidence is suggesting that all our senses are geared up to recognising the "one" (okay, maybe one of the "ones"). To decide whether your valentine is your happily-ever-after, take our advice:

- Sniff. Obviously, smelling like rubbish isn't conducive to falling in love, which is why the perfume industry continues to thrive. But the difference between smelling good and bad isn't all there is to it. A classic study showing how smell is linked to mate-choice is one in which women were asked to smell T-shirts that were worn previously by men. The researchers were able to link women's choices to the genetic differences between themselves and the men whose T-shirts they chose.
- Kiss. New research suggests that saliva also contains signals which reveal information about our genetic make-up. Some scientists believe that this is why the culture of kissing has evolved. (Maybe kissing on the first date is a good idea after all!)
- Call first. An interesting study recorded men and women's voices and then played them back to other groups of men and women, asking them to choose the recording that sounded most attractive. Strangely enough, the voices that were chosen to be most attractive belonged to people whose faces were also voted most attractive.

There it is. The scientists guide to dating. But remember, although science is making inroads into figuring out the mystery of love, research also teaches us that sometimes it's good to give way to alchemy over chemistry. **Happy Valentine's Day!**

