

“I worked with Erika, and to say that it was a successful experience would be an understatement. Not only did she find locations for dates that I didn’t even know existed, but she also handpicked my now-wife from Match.com and said, ‘I think she’s the one for you.’ Two years later, we’re enjoying married life. I can’t thank her enough for getting me out there again.”

—Scott, 38

...

In *Love at First Site*, dating coach Erika Ettin has taken her expertise—previously only available to her clients—and laid it out in an easy-to-use and exciting guide to the world of online dating. Erika shows her readers how to increase their odds for connections by marketing themselves well. Her background in economics helps her use the numbers game in her favor. It’s a simple equation: more profile views equal more dates, more dates equal a better chance at finding your match. With her tips and tricks, Erika can show you exactly how to increase your online dating odds.

Erika’s advice includes pointers for choosing your best profile picture, writing a winning profile, crafting emails that catch someone’s attention, and planning the first date. Erika’s knowledge is rooted in her highly successful coaching business as well as her own experience with online dating. Questions from Erika’s clients will save you the time of wondering how to approach strange situations—they’re all in here! And tales of dating adventures from Erika herself will leave you both encouraged and entertained.

Erika holds a BA in economics from Cornell University and an MBA from Georgetown University. Since launching her online dating consulting business, A Little Nudge, Erika has helped hundreds of clients in the United States and abroad find happiness. She currently lives in Washington, D.C.



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LOVE  
AT FIRST  
SITE

Ettin



*Erika Ettin*

CREATOR OF A LITTLE NUDGE®

LOVE

AT FIRST

SITE



TIPS AND TALES FOR  
**ONLINE DATING SUCCESS**  
FROM A MODERN-DAY  
MATCHMAKER

Hope you enjoy Chapter 1! The rest of the book can be found here:  
<http://www.amazon.com/Love-First-Site-Modern-Day-Matchmaker/dp/163299013X/>

## *Chapter 1*

# THE FIVE RULES OF THUMB

Anyone who has ever used an online dating site will understand when I say that some people's profile pictures are, well, less than flattering. I've seen it all—the shirtless bathroom selfie (often with dirty laundry sitting in the background), the photos of your last ski trip where all I can see is some guy in a ski mask, and the photo of you sleeping.

When it comes to online dating photos, I recommend using only three to five. With this in mind, let's look at the **five rules of thumb** for choosing your online dating photos.

## RULE #1: USE A CLEAR "FACE" PHOTO AS YOUR MAIN PROFILE PICTURE

On most online dating sites, you come up as a thumbnail, or a tiny, postage stamp-sized image that allows someone to briefly sneak a peek at you. If your photo is blurry or you're standing too far away from the camera, people can't see what you look like, so they won't even get as far as clicking on your profile.

If you don't have at least one clear head shot as your main profile picture, your profile will scream, "I'm hiding something!"

or worse, “I can’t even find a friend to snap a decent picture!” You really don’t want someone to pass you over simply because he or she can’t see what you look like at first glance.



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Some people may not click on her profile simply because this photo is a bit blurry.



© tankist, 2014

This one is clear and just beautiful.

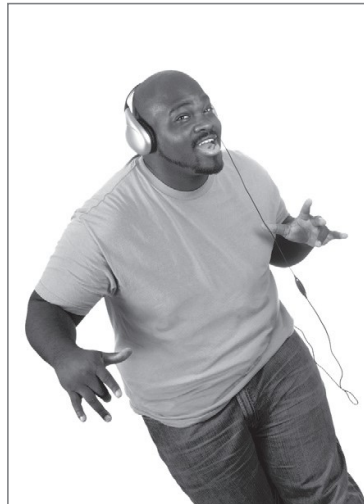
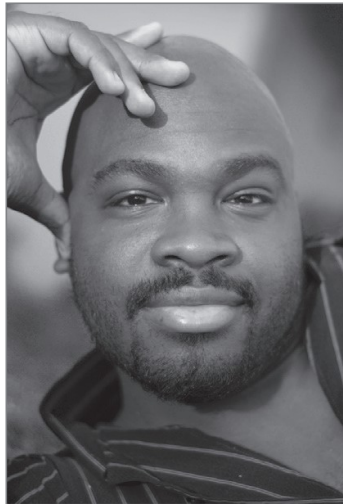
**THE MORAL:** Blurry photos don't help anyone, and they do hurt you.

## RULE #2: LESS IS MORE

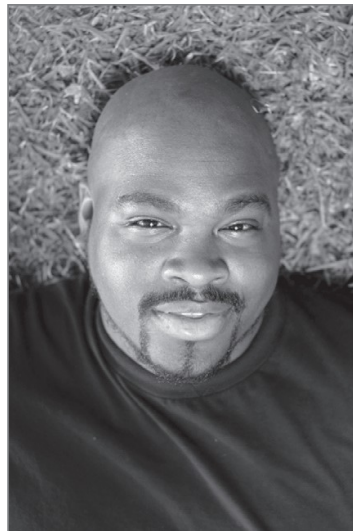
Would you believe that Match.com allows a whopping 26 online dating profile photos? (I didn't believe it, either!) When I used JDate in the olden days—before the fairly recent format change—only four pictures were allowed. Now, the site allows 12. I believe JDate's former rule of limiting the number of pictures to four was actually for the better. Let's say I have eight photos of myself on an online dating site. In four of them, I look really cute (two in a hot pink dress and two more in a pair of jeans and my favorite red sweater); in two, I look just okay (bad hair day . . . others with curly hair can relate); and in the remaining two, for one reason or another, I just don't look as good (*really* bad hair day, perhaps). My potential suitor may think that I'm the gal for him based on the first couple of pictures alone, but by the time he gets to the eighth one, he has already dismissed me, thinking that those bad pictures reflect what I actually look like. Clearly they do not, but he doesn't know that.

A picture is worth a thousand words, but 10 pictures are a waste of time. Now that Facebook has taken over the world, when it comes to online dating profiles, people often confuse the concept of posting just a few flattering pictures with posting an entire album. I have no doubt that your pictures

from your trip to Greece with you standing on the Acropolis are amazing. Just remember, there's a time and a place for them, and that place is not an online dating site.



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With these three pictures alone, this gentleman would do quite well.



By adding these two additional pictures—one where he looks like he has a bone to pick with someone and the other just plain ridiculous—anyone who is interested initially may dismiss him, simply because he gave too much information.

**THE MORAL:** Three great photos win over four or more mediocre photos any day. People will look for the one bad photo and decide not to email you because of it.

### RULE #3: BE BY YOURSELF IN THE SHOT

A client recently told me that someone emailed her on Match.com asking if he could have her friend's number. (It's a groaner, I know.) My client was confused for a moment and then realized that he had looked at her pictures, one of which included some girlfriends, and concluded that her friend was the woman of his dreams.

Online dating experts often give conflicting advice: three pictures versus five pictures, a long profile versus a short one, listing your salary range versus leaving it blank. But there's one online dating pointer that most experts can agree on: Be by yourself in your online dating pictures. The last thing you want is to be compared to someone else in your own profile, like my poor client.

People have all kinds of reasons for including others in their photos, and I'm here to debunk all of them and then add two caveats for when it's A-okay to share some screen time with someone else.

I want to show that I'm social.

If you're trying to show that you're social by including a picture of you with your friends, it often does the exact opposite; it looks like you're trying too hard to show that you're social. If you have an active social life, your profile should list some of the activities you like to do (kickball, poker, sailing club, etc.), and you'll therefore have no need to prove it in a picture. We also don't want to make anyone pause to wonder whose profile this is. Remember—don't let people compare you to your friends!



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Look at me! I'm social because I go to the beach with my friends. But which one am I again?



© Syda Productions, 2014

I guess I can have fun on my own, too.

I want to show that really attractive people (often of the opposite sex) like me.

The next picture is intimidating on many levels. 1) It makes the people looking at your profile compare themselves to your picture-mates to determine whether they are attractive enough for you. 2) It looks a bit conceited, like you exclusively spend time with only extremely attractive people.

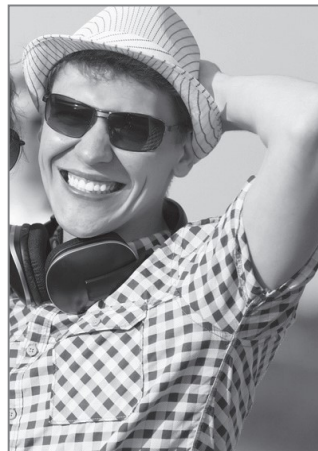


3) It makes the people looking at your profile wonder if all of your friends are of the opposite sex. Is there even room for someone else in your life? Lose-lose-lose.



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This picture is intimidating on many levels. I'd be nervous to contact this gentleman since he already has so many attractive women in his life.



© Sergey Nivens, 2014

While I would not recommend using a photo with sunglasses on as the main profile picture (it's too hard to see someone's eyes), this is a good supplementary picture for this profile. There is no need to show the other people in the photo; he's attractive on his own.

I want to show how attractive my ex was so people can see who's in my league.

This picture is also intimidating. 1) We compare ourselves. 2) We think you're not over the ex if he or she still takes a prominent spot in your profile. 3) If you're in a picture with just one other person of the opposite sex, we assume it's an ex, even if it's just a brother or sister. Again, lose-lose-lose.



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I think this gentleman might be a good fit, but I don't want to see him with this cute woman.



It turns out he looks pretty nice on his own . . .  
actually, even nicer.

I want to show how good-looking I am compared to the rest of my friends.

This faulty strategy has the opposite effect of the points previously made. People may think that you're only attracted to friends who aren't as attractive as you are and wonder why. (I know it seems silly.) Or, more likely, they'll see right through it. Shallow? Yes. True? Yes. I'll spare you the example for this one.

What are the two caveats? Children and pets. If you have children, then it's completely your choice as to whether or not to include a photo with them. If you do decide to post a picture with your child(ren), then just one is sufficient, and please add a caption saying that these are your children, lest someone assume something else. For pets, again, one picture with Fido is plenty. And please don't just show a picture of your pet without you in it. For all we know, you stopped some guy on the

street and asked to take a picture of his pup! You may laugh, but it happens.

**THE MORAL:** Being alone is best . . . in your online dating profile picture, that is.

## RULE #4: HAVE ONE PHOTO WHERE YOU ARE DOING SOMETHING INTERESTING

Many people have no idea what to say in the initial email to show someone that they have an interest in communicating. For this reason, it's best to give these potential suitors (or suitor-esses) one more thing to comment about. In other words, provide them with some "email bait."

In my old JDate profile, I had a photo of myself singing *The Star-Spangled Banner*. I received almost-daily emails asking where I was singing and how I got the gig. (Answers: A Washington Nationals game. A good demo and a lot of persistence.) This picture alone gave men the "in" they needed to strike up a conversation.

Other examples clients have used are:

- A woman playing ice hockey in full gear
- A man dressed as a clown since he performs for children every Sunday
- A woman bouncing on a large "egg" trampoline

- A man holding a ridiculously large pumpkin that looks like it should be featured in the *Guinness Book of World Records*
- A woman posing next to a sign that reads “Completely Nuts” (Oh wait—that was me again!)



I'm going to use myself for this example:



This is a cute picture that was taken of me at a baseball game a few years ago (older than I'd recommend using for the photo, but it will get the point across), but it's not really showing anything unique or special.



This photo instead shows me singing at that same Washington Nationals game. It was one of the best nights of my life, and when I used one of these photos on JDate, I got questions about it almost daily.

**THE MORAL:** Many people have no idea what to say in the initial email, so give them something easy to comment about, or “email bait.”

## RULE #5: BE ACCURATE

Have you ever walked into the coffee shop or bar for your first date with someone you corresponded with online, and you can't find the person you're supposed to meet? Is it because your date isn't there? Nope! It's because the person looks nothing like his or her pictures. Perhaps old pictures were posted, or perhaps good old Dr. Photoshop made a cameo. Sadly, this happens a lot.

If you lie in your online dating photos with the hope that you'll get to the date and “wow” the other person with your

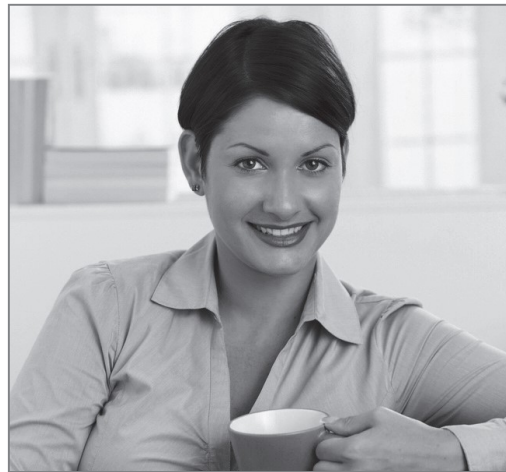
charm and wit, I have to tell you that this is just not how it works. When your date enters the room, all he or she can think is, “This person has lied to me.” Your charm is hidden behind the stinky layer of deceit all over you. So before trying to use your college photo to pass for your 45-year-old self, think again about how your date may react to your fib. Do the right thing and tell the truth.

It’s better to have someone meet you in person and think, “He or she is so much more attractive than the photos I saw,” instead of thinking, “Wow—those photos were a lie . . . or taken five years ago!” I recommend using photos taken within the last year, or even more recently if you’ve changed something significant about your appearance, like getting a very noticeable haircut or losing/gaining a significant amount of weight.



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If this is the photo you saw of this woman online . . .



... you wouldn't want to instead meet *this* woman on your date. And that's not because she's unattractive; it's because her photo wasn't accurate. It's actually the same woman, believe it or not, but the haircut is so drastic that it's hard to even recognize her.

**THE MORAL:** Don't lie about your looks . . . enough said.

This leads me to the biggest photo myth: Professional photos are frowned upon. Not true!

If you are going to take professional photos, just make sure they are in a natural setting versus in a contrived studio. Think trees, park benches, and sidewalks, not backdrops, awkward poses, and saccharine-sweet smiles. If you look good, no one will care who took the pictures or whether you paid for them. They'll just be happy they found someone so attractive!

Try to take shots in two different outfits for some variety. For men, one of the outfits should be something you'd wear out to a nice dinner—perhaps a pair of slacks, a long-sleeved buttoned shirt, and nice shoes. (Make sure the shoes match the belt!) For the other outfit, wear something casual that



you think represents you. Perhaps that's a pair of jeans and a polo shirt. For women, following the "dinner outfit" recommendation, a casual dress or a nice pair of slacks and a blouse would work. For the other outfit, again, choose something more casual, like a pair of jeans and a flattering top. V-necks tend to look best on women, and studies have shown that red is the best color to wear. Why red? One particular study has two explanations<sup>1</sup>:

1. Red is associated with love—plain and simple.
2. People flush red when they are sexually receptive, thus associating the color with attraction for the other person.

That's quite the correlation. They say the same is true for both men and women, so start stocking up on red clothes. Before you go on that red-shirt shopping spree, though, remember that simply posting a picture in your brand spankin' new red shirt is not the golden ticket to getting you a date every night of the week. The most important part of the picture is still you, and only you.

Lastly, try to avoid crazy patterns, like Hawaiian prints or huge flowers, since we want the attention to be on your face, not on the leis that are adorning the shirt you bought last year on vacation. Also, try to avoid solid white, as it tends to wash people out in their photos. The thing to keep in mind is that you want the attention on you, not on your clothes, for better or for worse.