

# A Psychologist's Guide to Online Dating

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## *The Atlantic:*

Edward Royzman, a psychology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, asks me to list four qualities on a piece of paper: physical attractiveness, income, kindness, and fidelity. Then he gives me 200 virtual “date points” that I’m to distribute among the four traits. The more I allocate to each attribute, the more highly I supposedly value that quality in a mate.

This experiment, which Royzman sometimes runs with his college classes, is meant to inject scarcity into hypothetical dating decisions in order to force people to prioritize.

I think for a second, and then I write equal amounts (70) next to both hotness and kindness, then 40 next to income and 20 next to fidelity.

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We may have more options for potential mates than ever before, but unfortunately people have trouble determining what they really want in their lovers. One 2008 study by Eli Finkel and Paul Eastwick at Northwestern University found, for example, that though men and women tend to say they prioritize different things in their mates (men are more likely to emphasize looks and women money), there’s no difference in the types of mates the two sexes actually choose in a real-life setting—which the authors gauged using a speed-dating exercise.

Read the whole story: [\*The Atlantic\*](#)