

match.com®

and eHarmony®

A Usability Study of Online Dating

February 2010

CATALYST GROUP

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Statement of Limitations

- This report summarizes conversations held with a total of 16 people (8 eHarmony and 8 Match.com users). The comments, quotes, and opinions in this document reflect only the views of these users and not those of eHarmony or Match.com who were not themselves involved with this research in any way.
- The intention of this report is to highlight broad themes and provide insights as to how these sites are used by the users we spoke to. The observations in this report reflect the views of these users which, while accurate for this population, may not be representative of the overall population.
- To protect the privacy of the users whose profiles have been used in this report, we substituted the main pictures with those from a photo library in most cases, and in other cases we blurred the pictures. All names and locations have been blurred.

Introduction

Introduction | Objectives and methodology

What was this project about?

With Valentine's day approaching we wanted to see what users thought of two of the most popular and heavily promoted online dating services: Match.com and eHarmony.

Ultimately we were interested in answering the following questions:

- > How effective are computers at helping users find love?
- > Given that the sites use different approaches to online dating, was one service considered superior to the other? If so, why?
- > How do users identify potential matches?
- > How do users assess the relationship potential of their matches?

What did we do?

- > We recruited 16 users in four groups: 4 men and 4 women who use each site. All users were between 30 and 40 years old
- > All users had to be active (i.e. they were paying members of either site), were currently seeking dates, and had been on at least one date via their site in the last month. Users were interviewed at office in New York City or over the internet using WebEx and telephone
- > We asked all users who were interviewed at Catalyst to eye-track a Match.com profile we created. Men were shown a female profile and vice-versa.
- > We then explored the users general experiences of online dating and their specific experiences with the site they use.
- > Next, users were asked to log into their account and demonstrate what they would typically do to find matches, assess matches, and then communicate with matches. We were interested in their overall views of the dating experience on their respective sites. Where users had used both sites, we were interested in their comparative observations

Introduction | Headlines

General Perceptions

- In general, users told us that online dating sites, including eHarmony and Match.com, come up short on their claimed ability to make good romantic matches.
- Specifically, there was little confidence in the idea of using technology to replace the very complex process of developing human relationships. The simple forms and crude matching techniques on these sites led many users to conclude that online dating sites are best viewed as a pool of potential matches which include some rough screening tools.
- Despite these shortcomings people use the tools mainly because the traditional approaches – bars, clubs, family, friends, via work, etc. aren't working for them.
- eHarmony was preferred by people who would prefer a high degree of handholding – it's suited to beginners and people with lower self confidence in initiating communication. Experienced online daters use eHarmony because "it's another pool of potential dates," however, they thought the profiles were "formulaic" and "hide people's individuality." Also, the length of the guided communication process can be painful in that it can literally take weeks before you are able to communicate openly with a potential match
- Match.com was thought to offer a good compromise between the restrictions of eHarmony and the "wild west" of certain free sites such as OKCupid. However, most users felt that the matching algorithms here were "rough" and could be made more effective. As a result, users often stated they felt they had to work harder than necessary because of the large number of poor matches returned.

Introduction | Headlines

Locating Matches

- eHarmony and Match.com each provide very different ways of identifying matches with Match.com providing a much larger number of options. For the most part Match.com users said they found the basic search useful but many showed us that they often add several “deal-breaker” criteria (such as age, wants kids, etc.) to the advanced search in the “more search options” interface.
- Other than the main search, Match.com users had a variety of techniques they used to identify potential matches. Of these, the Daily5 (a computer generated match based on answers gathered from quick poll results) was the next most commonly used method of identifying potential matches. Although it wasn’t thought to be particularly effective it was felt to be a fun approach. A variety of other contact methods were mentioned such as “Who’s viewed me?” (provides a list of people who clicked on a member’s profile), “Winks” and email contacts but usage of these was mixed amongst our users.
- We also probed on some of the readymade computer matching methods Match.com offers, notably Mutual Matches (which matches users who have each described each other as the person they are looking for) and Reverse Matches (which identifies Match users that have described the searcher as the type of person they are looking for). The Mutual Match search had been used by most users but only a few used it with any frequency citing that they felt their personal matching techniques were more effective. Few people understood the Reverse match which reflected its low usage level
- On eHarmony locating potential matches is limited to only those people that the site determines to be a match. A few users saw this as an advantage but many users felt this was a significant weakness of the site – specifically as eHarmony does not provide any feedback as to the degree of compatibility or where the compatibility is. Given this lack of transparency, many users felt the site would be improved if they could also define their own searches

Introduction | Headlines

Profile Assessment

- Initially, we were quite surprised to observe that men and women assess the information in match profiles almost identically regardless of the site they are on. But as we observed over the course of our study, online dating appears to be governed primarily by “facts” at the start of the process which then quickly give way to more complex factors
- Assessment is typically performed as follows: (1) Look at pictures; (2) Look at basic information for high-level “deal-breakers” such as age, distance from each other, and kids; (3) then, finally, consider user created descriptions for “human touch points.” While the last step is where likely compatibility is most strongly identified, it was very apparent that most users felt they were wasting time if potential matches don’t pass muster in the first two stages. A typical comment was “Why would I want to learn if a person is interesting if I don’t find myself physically attracted to them or that they are not interested in having kids if I am?”
- Initial assessment is generally quick, ranging from a few seconds if pictures do not suggest physical attraction or a “deal-breaker” is encountered, to about 45 seconds (for both men and women) for a more complete profile.
- Eye-tracking confirmed what users told us about the Match.com “computer-based chemistry assessment” tool - users paid it very little attention, if any. eHarmony users were also very skeptical about the effectiveness of the “29 levels of compatibility calculation”
- Many users talked about their confidence level improving over time in regards to their ability to identify better matches for themselves from information provided in user profiles. Several users recounted almost identical stories of their early online dating experiences where they failed to observe “red-flags” in a potential match’s profile as they were excited about the prospect of going on a date. After several dates it seems clear that many users develop more acute assessment abilities. As one user told us “I want to go on dates with people I think I have potential with and not waste my time with people I should have avoided...”

Introduction | Headlines

Communicating with Matches

- This is where the other main difference between eHarmony and Match.com exists and is a significant factor for some users as to whether they use one site or the other.
- On Match.com, users are able to begin communicating immediately they locate a potential match. For many, this is the preferred approach. The matched pair remain “hidden” from each other until they choose to “reveal” themselves to the other party. This typically occurs after several email exchanges as they prepare to meet for a date. If an offer to communicate is not reciprocated then the parties remain hidden. This approach definitely favors those people who are comfortable initiating contact with a potential match, and those who want a more “hands-on” approach to dating rather than leaving more of the process to a computer system that dictates a prescribed number of stages that need to be completed before more open communication can occur
- In contrast, eHarmony strongly recommends its members complete a prescribed set of information exchanges before “open” unrestricted communication is made available. This approach can take several weeks to complete, which for some users works well, but for many eHarmony users this was cited as one of the most significant drawbacks of the site. For online daters who are unsure of themselves or shy, the availability of multiple choice questions and answers, and lists of “must/haves and can’t stands” are attractive. This is because early exchanges with a potential match do not require users to stare at blank email forms and agonize over what to write. However, a more seasoned dater summed up the approach as “dating training wheels” given (a) the limitations that these tools impose on the ability to truly express one’s personality, and (b) the delay created in being able to set up a date if it’s felt compatibility may be present
- One of the users (who we would describe as “very seasoned”) provided a very interesting insight into how he prioritizes his communications with potential dates. First, he classifies messages (emails, winks etc) as either “outbound” or “inbound.” Outbound communication is initiated by him whereas inbound connections are not. He feels that this is an important distinction as his outbound messages (and responses) are much more valuable to him than his inbound communication, which, while flattering, may be from potential dates he is not interested in. Whereas, all of his outbound communication targets potential dates he definitely wishes to explore further.

Process Overview & Comparison

Process Overview | Match.com vs. eHarmony

match.com

Any method can be used for identifying matches. No restrictions on how a potential match is located.

Users may contact a match as soon as they feel ready to do so.

- Who's Viewed Me
- Mutual Matches
- Match Updates
- Daily5
- Reverse Matches
- Custom Search

Profile

Open Communication

Phase 1 Identify Matches



Phase 2 Review Profile



Phase 3 Communicate

eH "match engine"

Profile

Get to know each other
 Select/send questions
 Review match answers
 Answer match questions

Can't stands/Must haves
 Select/send selections
 Review match selections

Learn more about each other
 Select/send questions
 Review match answers
 Answer match questions

Open Communication

eHarmony

This is the only way that a match is created

eH strongly encourages users to complete all of these steps before Open Communication starts. They can take several weeks to complete.

(These steps can be bypassed if both sides of a match agree)

Phase 1: Identifying Your Matches

The eHarmony Way

Managing Matches

eHarmony.com

Home

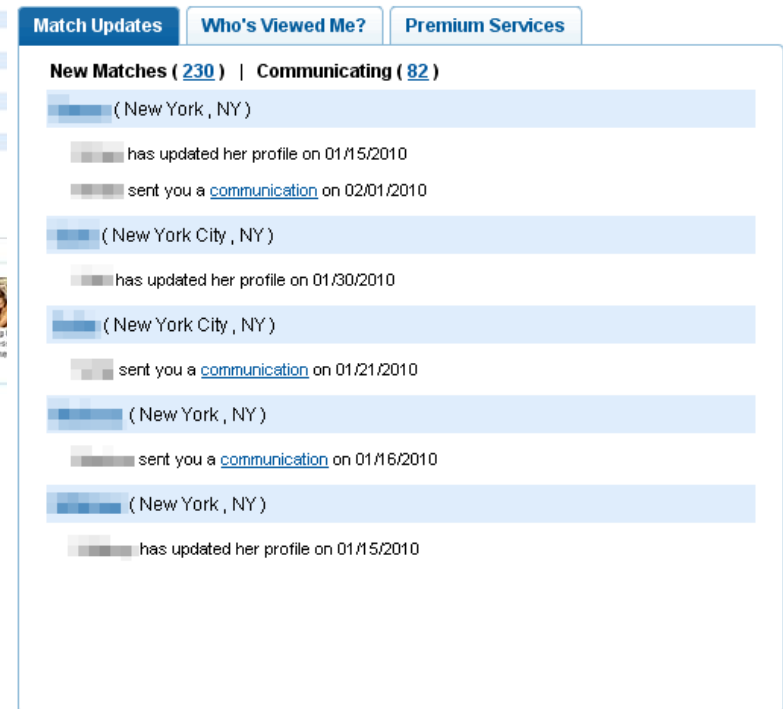
➤ After logging into their account, most users said they typically scan the list of updates that appear under the “Match Updates” tab. While users appreciated the intent of this area, many thought there could be further enhancements, including:

- The ability to see all of the communication messages grouped together separately from the profile updates. Currently, all of the updates are mixed in together in reverse chronological order. One user described this area as a “hodgepodge of stuff.”

- More detailed updates such as “Aaaa has uploaded new photos on her profile” or “Bbbb has sent you his Can’t Stands and Must Haves.”



Home

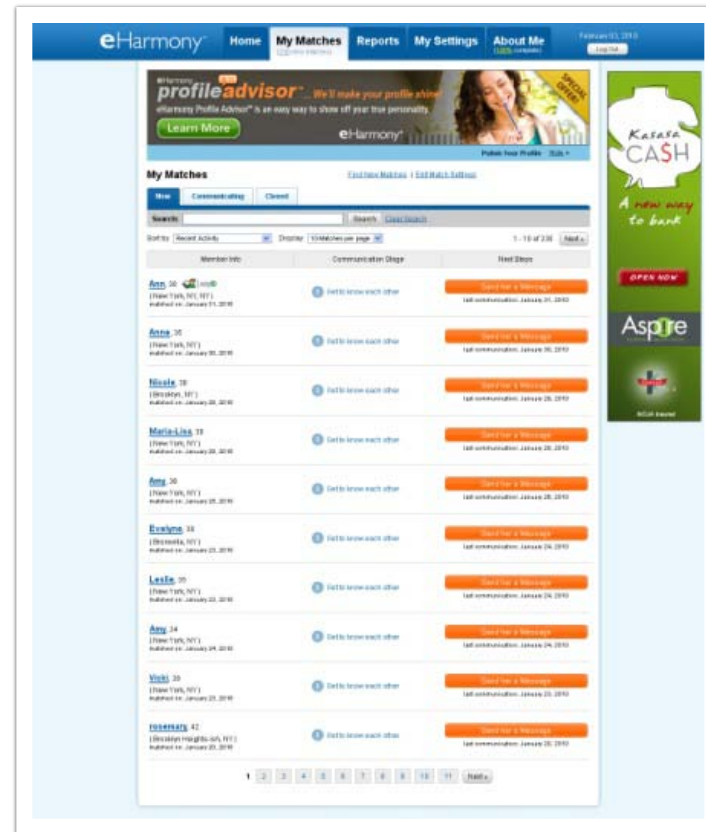


Match Updates

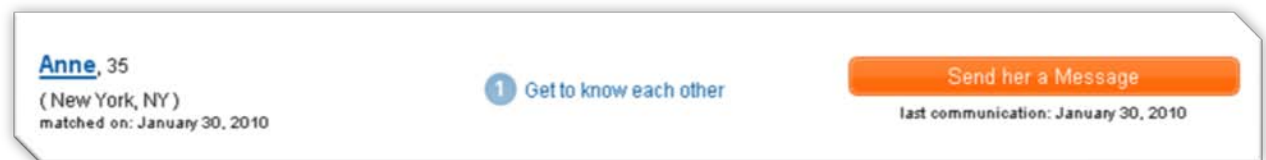
Managing Matches | eHarmony.com

My Matches

- While an individual profile can be accessed directly from the Homepage, most users navigated to the My Matches page. This page lists out all matches that the eHarmony algorithm thinks is suitable for an individual – matches which are based on the 450 or so questions a user had answered when creating their profile.
- Unlike Match.com, a user does not have the ability to search for potential matches on their own within the eHarmony site. Simply put, the matches they get are the matches they get.
- All matches are segregated into 3 areas: New, Communicating, and Closed. The “New” tab lists all new incoming matches, while the “Communicating” tab is a list of people with whom a user is corresponding. Matches housed under the “Closed” tab are matches which a user has decided as unsuitable.



My Matches (“New” Tab)



Individual Match

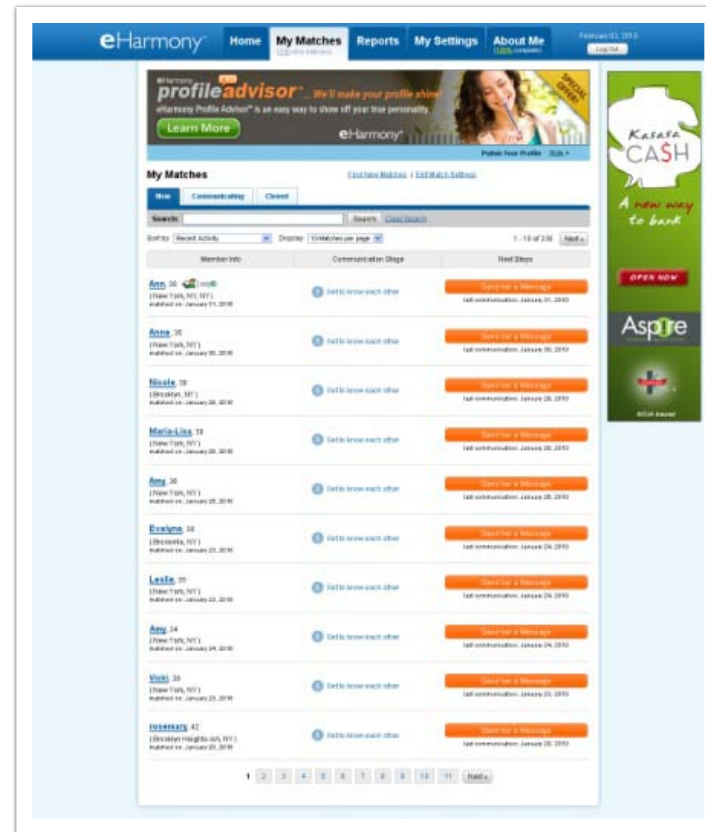
Managing Matches | eHarmony.com

My Matches (cont.)

- All users thought the exclusion of photos and limited sort functions hindered their ability to identify people of potential interest and remember the various people with whom they are communicating. The pages currently read as a long list of names making it difficult to distinguish matches from one another.

“I get confused who I've responded to, who I haven't, and which [ones] I've read.”

“It would be nice to see a picture or their occupation just so I remember who's who. One time I had 3 guys with the same name.”



My Matches (“New” Tab)

Anne, 35
(New York, NY)
matched on: January 30, 2010

1 Get to know each other

Send her a Message

last communication: January 30, 2010

Individual Match

Managing Matches

eHarmony.com

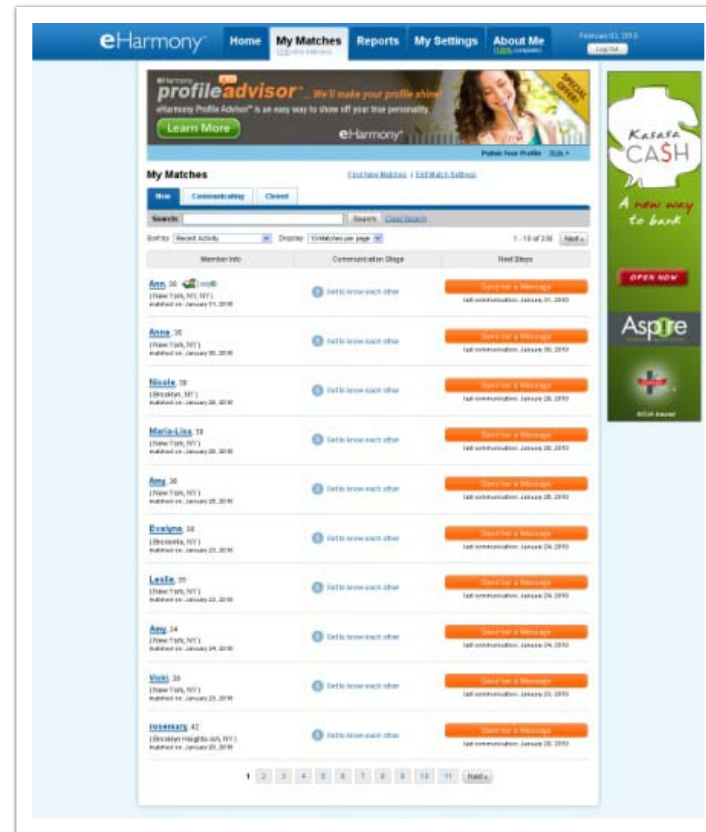
My Matches (cont.)

- Many users wanted greater transparency in eHarmony’s matching system as they had spent both time and money to answer hundreds of questions during the initial setup process. A few users wanted to see a progress bar which would indicate how well they were matched with another person (e.g. 90% match).

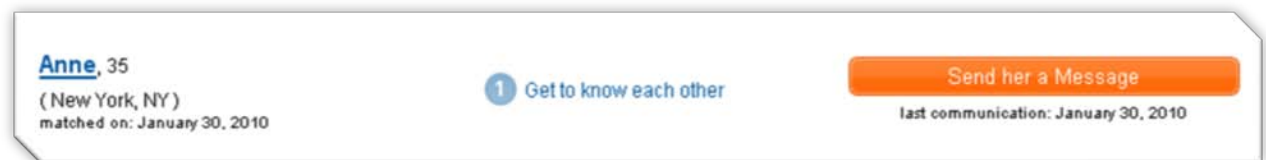
“I want to know how well I’m matched...give me confidence in that match.”

- Several users demonstrated what they felt were “flaws” in the matching system.

“I indicated that I was looking for people within a 20 mile radius of my zip code and I keep getting people that are hundreds of miles away in a different state.”



My Matches (“New” Tab)



Individual Match

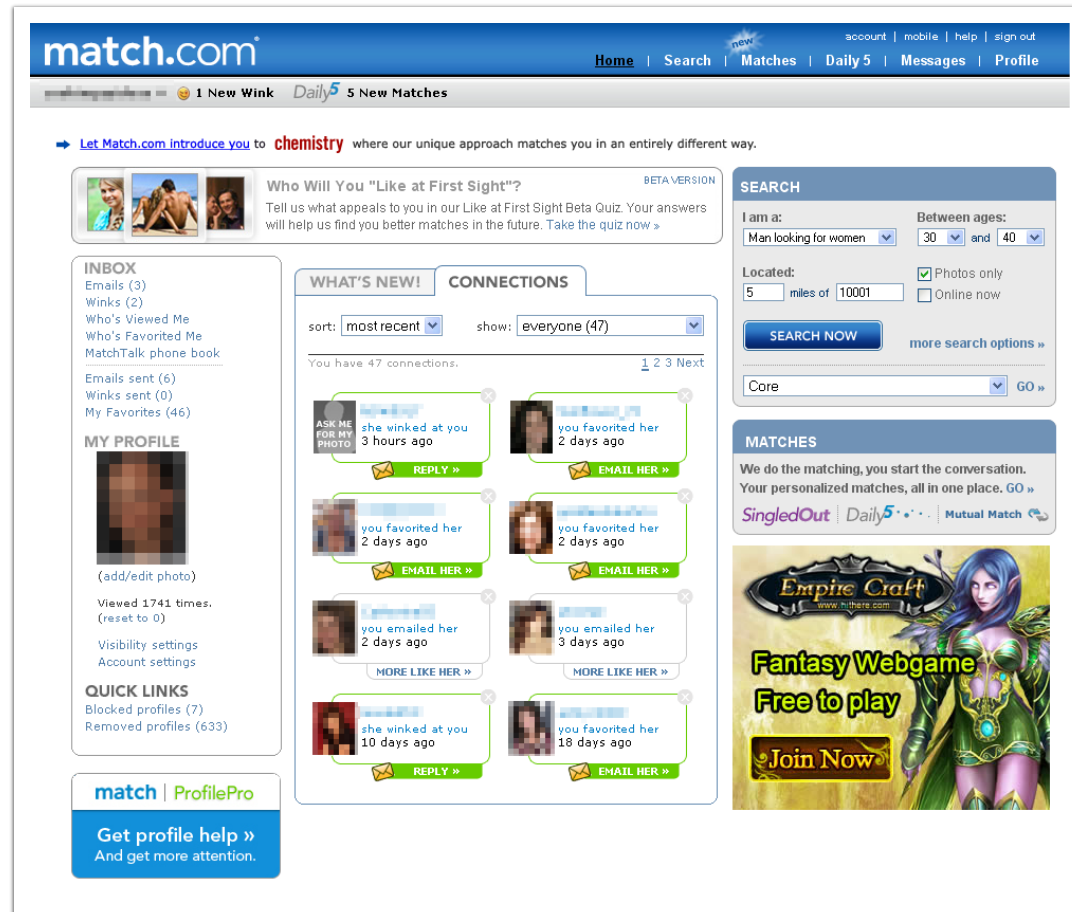
The Match.com Way

Identifying Matches | Match.com

Home

- > User reaction to this screen was positive for the most part. However, more experienced users wanted to see separation between “connections” that they had initiated versus ones they hadn’t, as these were more valuable to them as indicators of mutual interest.

“When I send an email to someone it’s because I am interested in them. If I hear back from them then I want to be able see this quickly.”



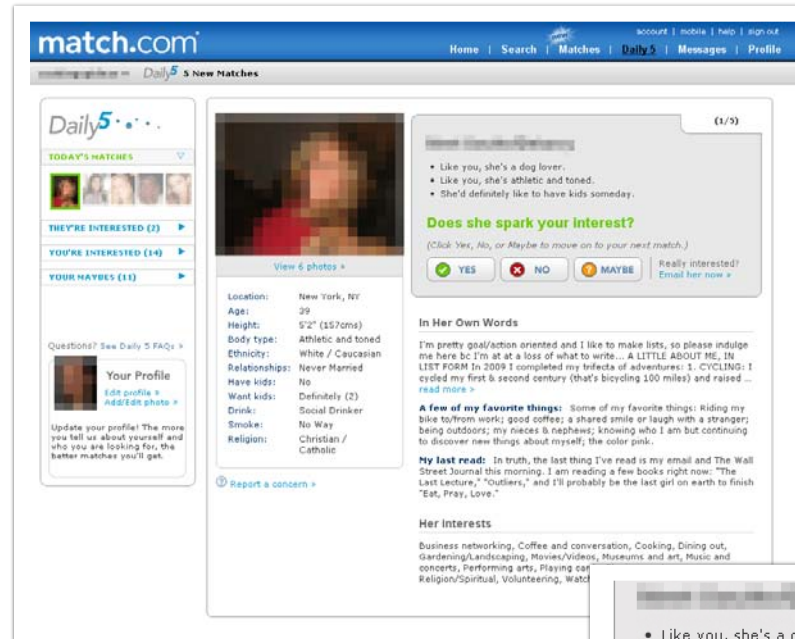
Home

Identifying Matches

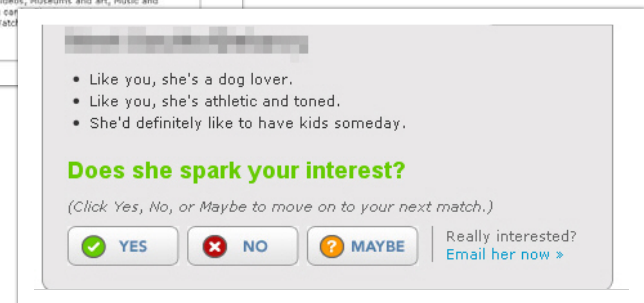
Match.com

Daily5

- > All of the Match users we spoke to mentioned they used this feature of the site. However, there was some variation in the reasons for doing so.
- > The most common reason given was that this is a “quick and easy” way of seeing a few possible matches without having to do any significant “work.” Users liked the “short version” of the full Match profiles as they contained pictures and the basic information that users told us was so important initially. In the spirit of a quick read, only the first few lines of some of the In Your Own Words section are also shown. The simple “decision” buttons (Yes, No, Maybe) are very easy to understand and if the Yes button is selected the potential match is notified.
- > We surmise that the reason that this type of profile appealed to all of online daters we spoke to is that while presenting a simple structure it also removes any of the elements that more “seasoned” online daters had problems with in the full profiles for more details.



Daily 5



Yes/No/Maybe

Identifying Matches

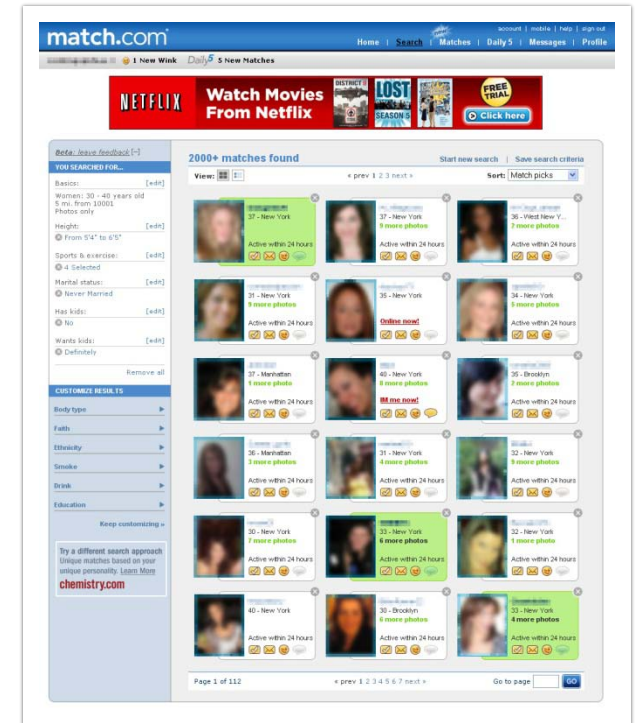
Match.com - Search

Custom Search

- Match.com provides a fairly open approach to dating. Users create their own searches which can be very simple to quite complex. These searches are based on their preferences and how strongly they rate their importance (e.g. height).
- Several users explained that while Match’s approaches may seem to be a “logical” approach to finding a potential mate, the problem with Match.com is that it relies on users providing information about themselves and their mate which may not be objective – some people may just be bad at knowing what they want or need, or, at worst, delusional.
- Furthermore, the algorithms are not particularly discriminating about what they appear to match. This can result in some cases where a user does not provide any responses for some of the multiple choice questions or they go “check-box crazy.” In any event, we were shown examples by a few users where they apparently had a strong match with someone who had not provided answers to many questions.



Customize Search

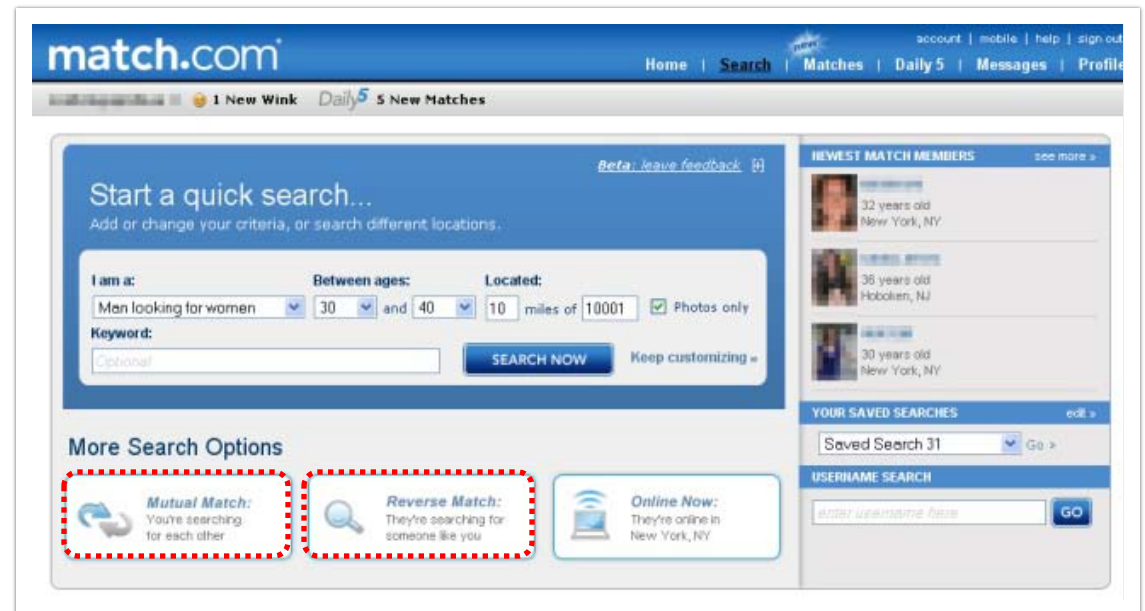


Search Results

Identifying Matches | Match.com

Mutual Match/Reverse Match

- In addition to the custom search, Match.com provides options to search by “Mutual Match” or “Reverse Match.”
- In “Mutual Match,” two users fit each other’s desired criteria (e.g. age, height, wants/has kids, etc). For example, if Jane is a 5’6 female searching for a 6’1 male, a “Mutual Match” will list all males who are 6’1 who are looking for females that are 5’6 (Jane’s height). It’s a case of “You’re what I’m looking for and I’m what you’re looking for.”
- In “Reverse Match,” a user searches for potentials who are looking for him/her (i.e. “They’re searching for someone like you.”) Going back to the previous example with 5’6 Jane, a “Reverse Match” will list all males who are looking for females that are 5’6.
- While both search options appealed in theory to some extent, in practice the Mutual Match was used only occasionally and the Reverse Match only rarely. Users explained that the concepts seemed tricky to understand exactly, particularly the Reverse Match. Some users, who didn’t feel the search algorithms were particularly effective with “normal searches” were not inclined to experiment with more “exotic” ones.



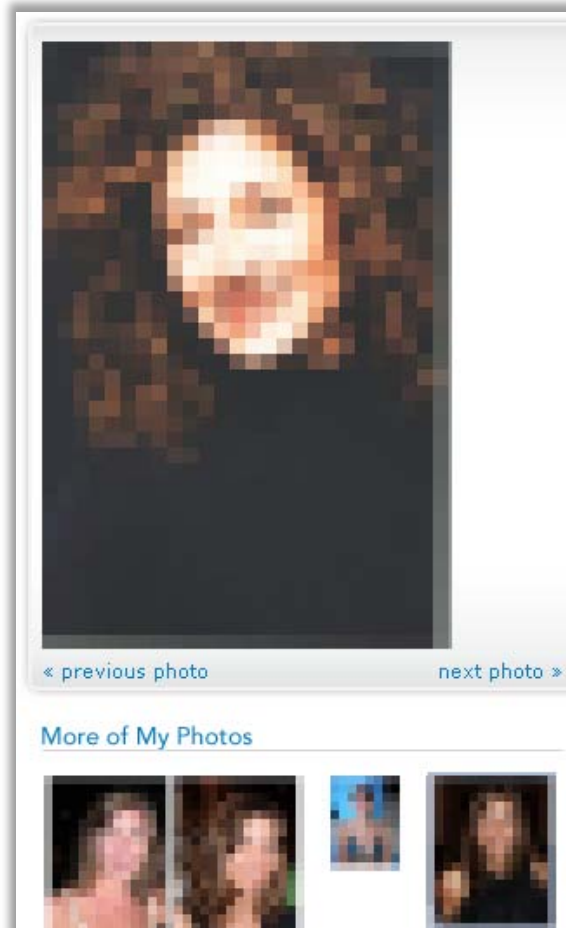
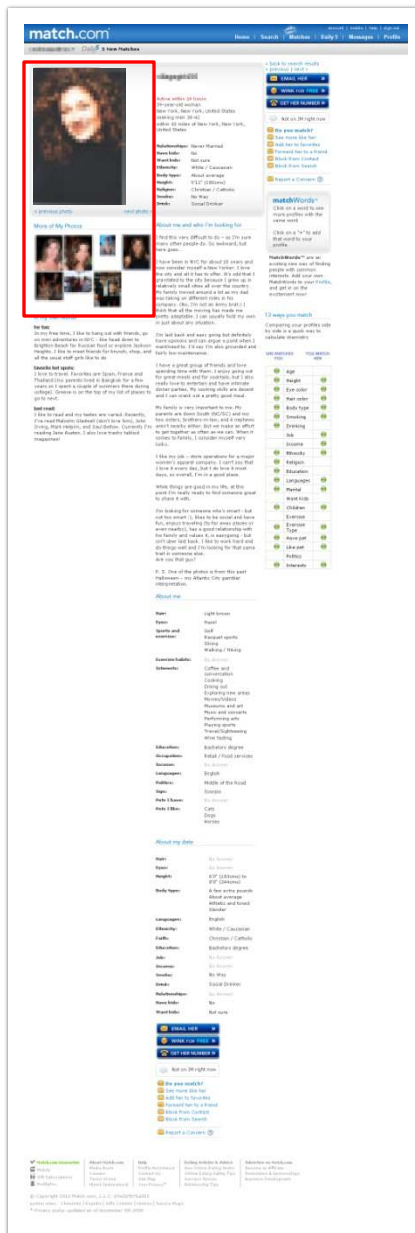
Searches

Phase 2: Assessing a Profile

The Match.com Way

Profile Review Sequence | Match.com

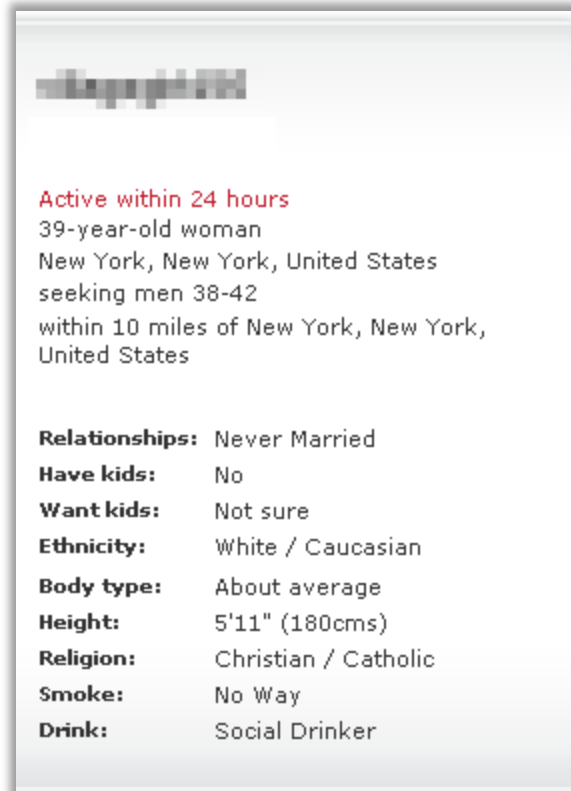
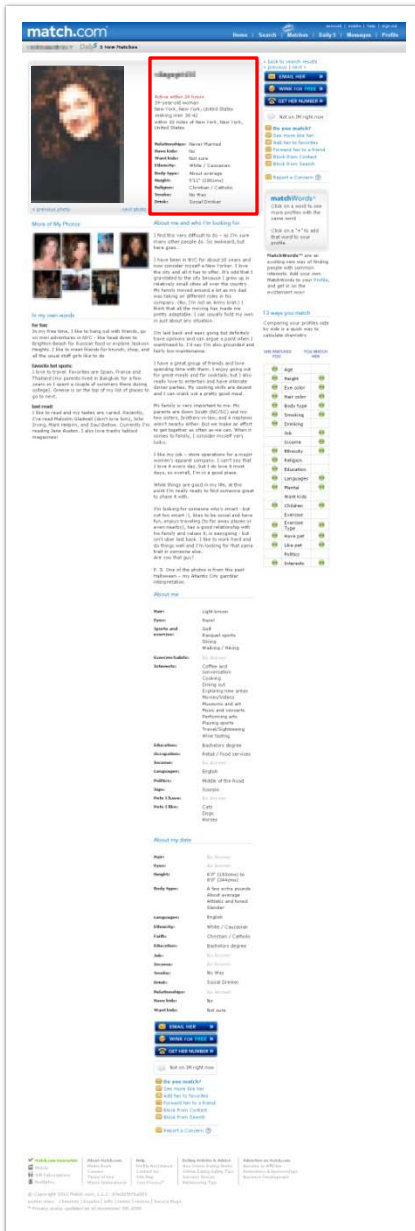
#1 – Photographs



- > Next /Previous buttons are used to quickly review photos.
- > Photos are used to determine the degree of “physical interest.”
- > Good pictures are essential as they communicate confidence and seriousness.
- > Users liked the large picture viewer that was embedded in the Match.com profile – as it allows for quick browsing.
- > Small photos, or ones in which the person is difficult to see, don’t work well
- > Users ideally want to see a range of photos from close-up to full length. This helps avoid surprises if a date happens.
- > Several users pointed out that it raises a red flag if photos don’t seem to show you at a consistent age.
- > Users look for clues in the photos (e.g. is the match always partying in their shots, do backgrounds suggesting an interest in travel, an untidy apartment etc.).
- > If the potential match does not pass this step, virtually all users said they would bypass this person.

Profile Review Sequence | Match.com

#2 – Basic Information



- Match users found it useful to see when the user last logged on - i.e. "Active within ... hours/days/weeks" as this signals how available a match might be.
- Users wanted to ensure that their potential date met at least some basic criteria. They are looking for deal-breakers (e.g. if a user wants children but the match does not, then there is little point continuing with this profile).
- The most commonly cited deal-breaker details were : Age; Distance; Height; Have Kids; Want Kids; Smoking; Religion
- Several users pointed out that it's important that people are honest about this information. Many users reported they have been on one or more dates where they have discovered this information is not as stated on their match's profile. Meeting under false pretences creates the wrong dating ambience.

Profile Review Sequence

Match.com

#3 – Free Text



In my own words

for fun:
In my free time, I like to hang out with friends, go on mini adventures in NYC - like head down to Brighton Beach for Russian food or explore Jackson Heights. I like to meet friends for brunch, shop, and all the usual stuff girls like to do

favorite hot spots:
I love to travel. Favorites are Spain, France and Thailand (my parents lived in Bangkok for a few years so I spent a couple of summers there during college). Greece is on the top of my list of places to go to next.

last read:
I like to read and my tastes are varied. Recently, I've read Malcolm Gladwell (don't love him), John Irving, Mark Helprin, and Saul Bellow. Currently I'm reading Jane Austen. I also love trashy tabloid magazines!

About me and who I'm looking for

I find this very difficult to do - as I'm sure many other people do. So awkward, but here goes...

I have been in NYC for about 10 years and now consider myself a New Yorker. I love the city and all it has to offer. It's odd that I gravitated to the city because I grew up in relatively small cities all over the country. My family moved around a lot as my dad was taking on different roles in his company. (No, I'm not an Army brat.) I think that all the moving has made me pretty adaptable. I can usually hold my own in just about any situation.

I'm laid back and easy going but definitely have opinions and can argue a point when I want/need to. I'd say I'm also grounded and fairly low maintenance.

I have a great group of friends and love spending time with them. I enjoy going out for great meals and for cocktails, but I also really love to entertain and have intimate dinner parties. My cooking skills are decent and I can crank out a pretty good meal.

My family is very important to me. My parents are down South (NC/SC) and my two sisters, brothers-in-law, and 4 nephews aren't nearby either. But we make an effort to get together as often as we can. When it comes to family, I consider myself very lucky.

I like my job - store operations for a major women's apparel company. I can't say that I love it every day, but I do love it most days, so overall, I'm in a good place.

While things are good in my life, at this point I'm really ready to find someone great to share it with.

I'm looking for someone who's smart - but not too smart :), likes to be social and have fun, enjoys traveling (to far away places or even nearby), has a good relationship with his family and values it, is easygoing - but isn't uber laid back. I like to work hard and do things well and I'm looking for that same trait in someone else.
Are you that guy?

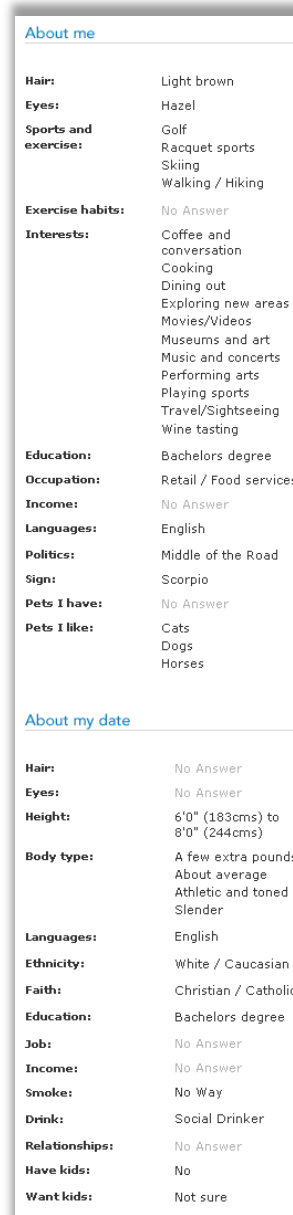
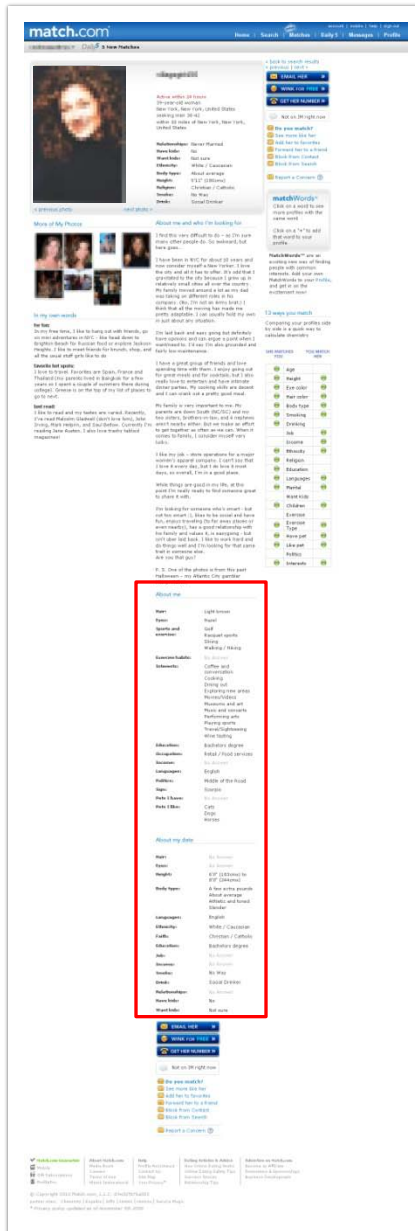
P. S. One of the photos is from this past Halloween - my Atlantic City gambler interpretation.

- Match users tended to look at the In My Own Words section to try to identify “touch points” of common interest or simply things of interest.
- Users varied in their behavior regarding the About Me And Who I’m Looking For section. Some would look at this section and others felt it was a waste of time to do so before assessing the About My Date Section.
- Users, particularly more seasoned ones, felt that it was better to read about a match’s interests than to rely on the “computer generated Chemistry Analyzer” shown in stage #5.
- Many users talked about the importance of spelling and good grammar. While a match may have a stylized way of expressing themselves in writing, it was clear that judgments are being made and comparisons to other information supplied (e.g. education level). Several users talked about the process as being one of simultaneously looking for red-flags as well as information that might indicate a potential match.
- Users also mentioned the importance of completing these sections since sparse or no information tended to reflect badly on the match.

Profile Review Sequence | Match.com

#4 – About Me & My Date

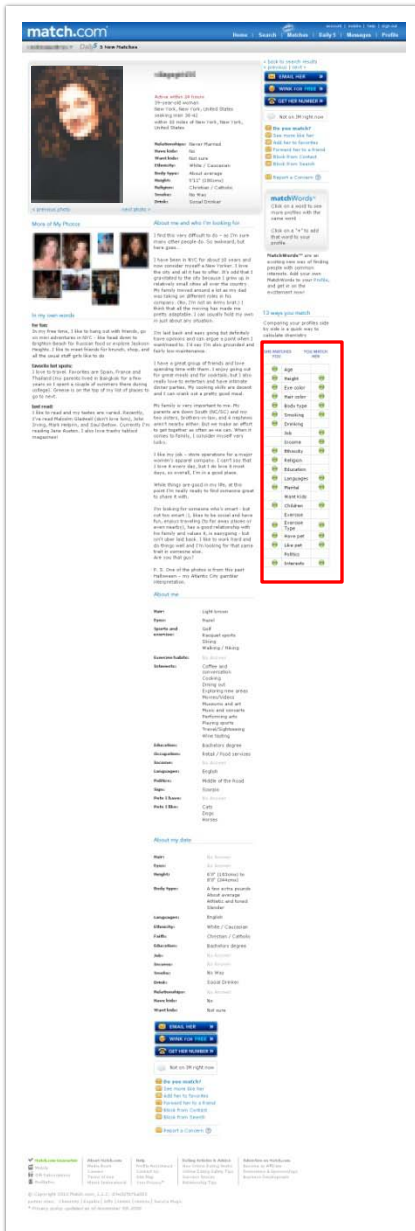
- The About Me section of the Match profile was only thought to be somewhat useful at best.
- On one hand it provided some factual information about a match (e.g. hair, eye color, education level).
- On the other hand many users complained about the generality of the “checkbox” options used in the Interests section. For example “Interested in dining out” was often pointed to as useless information.
- Several users thought that this section could be much more useful if there was an option to provide some detail in a free text box. E.g. “Cooking – I like experimenting and making dishes from all over the world, particularly Asia.” Adding these personal touches would be a good opportunity to reinforce information provided in the free-text sections in stage #3
- A few users felt that how a person completes this section indicates something about them. A person who goes “click crazy” doesn’t come over as particularly discriminating, and a person who barely answers any of these sections can appear to be making little effort.



Profile Review Sequence

Match.com

#5 – Ways You Match



13 ways you match

Comparing your profiles side by side is a quick way to calculate chemistry

	SHE MATCHES YOU	YOU MATCH HER
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Height		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Eye color	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hair color	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Body type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Smoking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Drinking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Job		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Income		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ethnicity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Languages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marital		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Want Kids		
Children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Exercise		
Exercise Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have pet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Like pet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Politics		
Interests	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

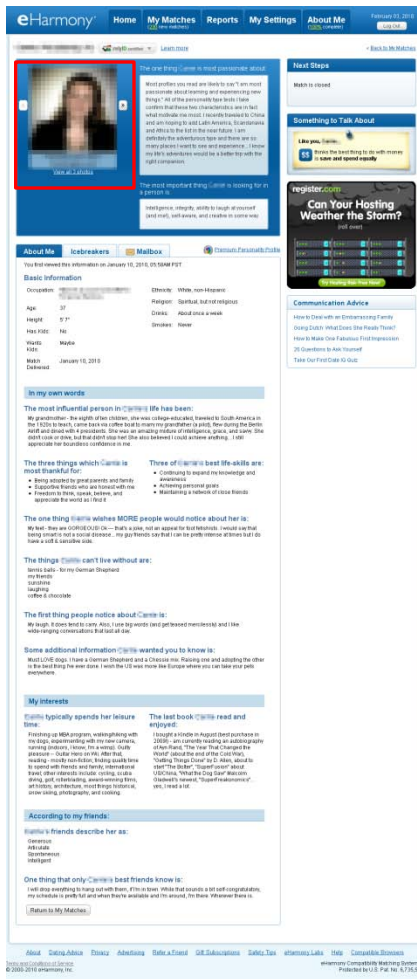
- Barely any of the users we spoke to paid any attention to this area. This was confirmed in the eye-tracking data we collected.
- When asked why this was, users provided a number of replies: a) it's too much of a mixture of important and unimportant information (e.g. Hair Color and Children); b) it's too vague (e.g. Interests – does it mean all interests indicated match or just one?); c) at best, it indicates a very rough level of matching and no-one thought it was an effective way of "calculating chemistry" as claimed in the paragraph above the table.

The eHarmony Way

Profile Review Sequence

eHarmony.com

#1 – Photographs



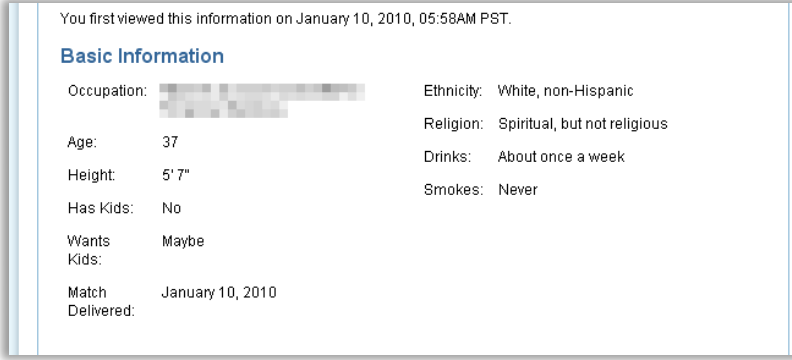
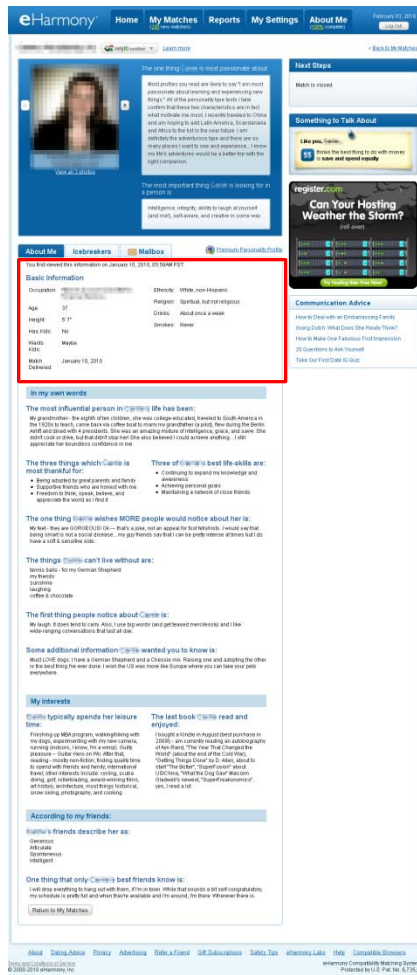
- Once again, photos are important to determine the degree of “physical interest.”
- Users seemed less receptive to the photo viewer on eH compared to the comments we heard for Match. The primary complaint was that the main imbedded picture could be a little larger (a larger photo viewer is available but users were not enthusiastic about it appearing in a separate panel).

The following points are identical to the ones raised by Match.com users

- Good pictures are essential as they communicate confidence and seriousness.
- Users liked the large picture viewer that was embedded in the profile – it allows for quick browsing.
- Small photos, or ones that are hard to see the match in, don't work well.
- Users ideally want to see a range of photos from close-up to full length. This helps to avoid surprises if a date happens.
- Also, several users pointed out that it raises a red flag if photos don't seem to show you at a consistent age.
- Users look for clues in the photos (e.g. is the match always partying in their shots, do backgrounds suggesting an interest in travel, an untidy apartment etc.).
- If the potential match does not pass this assessment step, virtually all users said they would bypass this match.

Profile Review Sequence | eHarmony.com

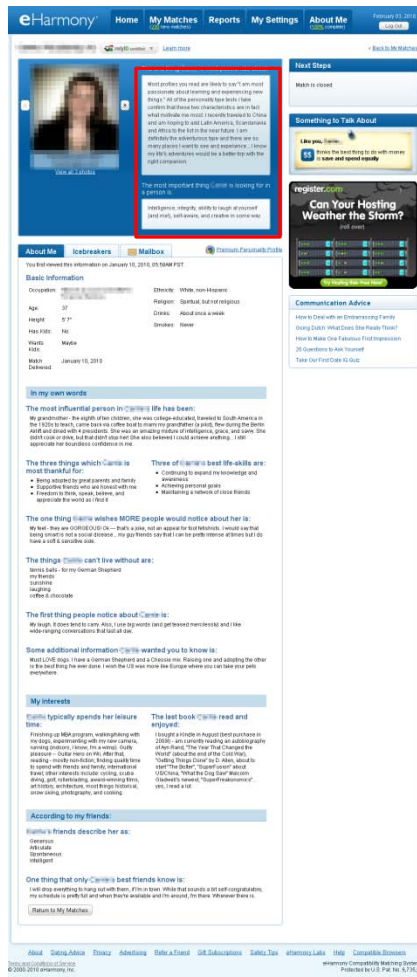
#2 – Basic Information



- Many users felt that this information was very important after looking at photos – just like on Match. However, most eH users said they thought this information would be more usefully positioned to the right of the photographs as this would facilitate a more efficient evaluation process
- Several users also pointed out that they thought the information was too “spaced out” and it would be more efficient to scan the data if it was organized in a single column

Profile Review Sequence | eHarmony.com

#3 – My Passions & What I’m Looking For



The one thing [User] is most passionate about:

Most profiles you read are likely to say "I am most passionate about learning and experiencing new things." All of the personality type tests I take confirm that these two characteristics are in fact what motivate me most. I recently traveled to China and am hoping to add Latin America, Scandinavia and Africa to the list in the near future. I am definitely the adventurous type and there are so many places I want to see and experience... I know my life's adventures would be a better trip with the right companion.

The most important thing [User] is looking for in a person is:

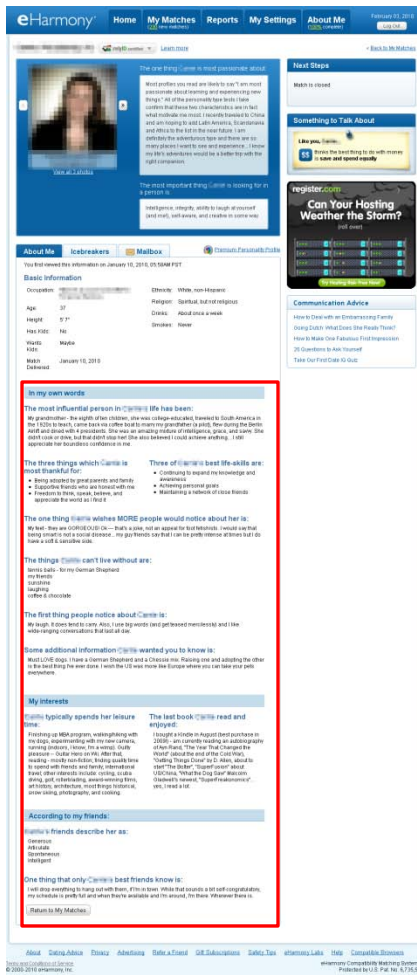
Intelligence, integrity, ability to laugh at yourself (and me!), self-aware, and creative in some way.

- A few users thought that learning about a person's passions and what's important to that person was less important at this state (especially given its prominent location). As one user put it "why would I bother reading about this person before I knew if they wanted kids like I do?"
- As a result we hear most users say that they thought this information should trade places with the Basic Information section.

Profile Review Sequence

eHarmony.com

#4 – In My Own Words, My Interests, and According To My Friends



In my own words

The most influential person in [Carmie] life has been:

My grandmother - the eighth of ten children, she was college-educated, traveled to South America in the 1920s to teach, came back via coffee boat to marry my grandfather (a pilot), flew during the Berlin Airlift and dined with 4 presidents. She was an amazing mixture of intelligence, grace, and savvy. She didn't cook or drive, but that didn't stop her! She also believed I could achieve anything... I still appreciate her boundless confidence in me.

The three things which [Carmie] is most thankful for:

- Being adopted by great parents and family
- Supportive friends who are honest with me
- Freedom to think, speak, believe, and appreciate the world as I find it

Three of [Carmie] best life-skills are:

- Continuing to expand my knowledge and awareness
- Achieving personal goals
- Maintaining a network of close friends

The one thing [Carmie] wishes MORE people would notice about her is:

My feet - they are GORGEOUS! Ok --- that's a joke, not an appeal for foot fetishists. I would say that being smart is not a social disease... my guy friends say that I can be pretty intense at times but I do have a soft & sensitive side.

The things [Carmie] can't live without are:

tennis balls - for my German Shepherd
my friends
sunshine
laughing
coffee & chocolate

The first thing people notice about [Carmie] is:

My laugh. It does tend to carry. Also, I use big words (and get teased mercilessly) and I like wide-ranging conversations that last all day.

Some additional information [Carmie] wanted you to know is:

Must LOVE dogs. I have a German Shepherd and a Chessie mix. Raising one and adopting the other is the best thing I've ever done. I wish the US was more like Europe where you can take your pets everywhere.

My interests

[Carmie] typically spends her leisure time:

Finishing up MBA program, walking/hiking with my dogs, experimenting with my new camera, running (indoors, I know, I'm a wimp), Guilty pleasure - Guitar Hero on Wii. After that, reading - mostly non-fiction; finding quality time to spend with friends and family, international travel; other interests include cycling, scuba diving, golf, rollerblading, award-winning films, art history, architecture, most things historical, snow skiing, photography, and cooking.

The last book [Carmie] read and enjoyed:

I bought a Kindle in August (best purchase in 2009) - am currently reading an autobiography of Ayn Rand, "The Year That Changed the World" (about the end of the Cold War), "Getting Things Done" by D. Allen, about to start "The Bolter", "SuperFusion" about US/China, "What the Dog Saw" Malcolm Gladwell's newest, "SuperFreakonomics"... yes, I read a lot.

According to my friends:

[Carmie] friends describe her as:

Generous
Articulate
Spontaneous
Intelligent

One thing that only [Carmie] best friends know is:

I will drop everything to hang out with them, if I'm in town. While that sounds a bit self-congratulatory, my schedule is pretty full and when they're available and I'm around, I'm there. Wherever there is.

[Return to My Matches](#)

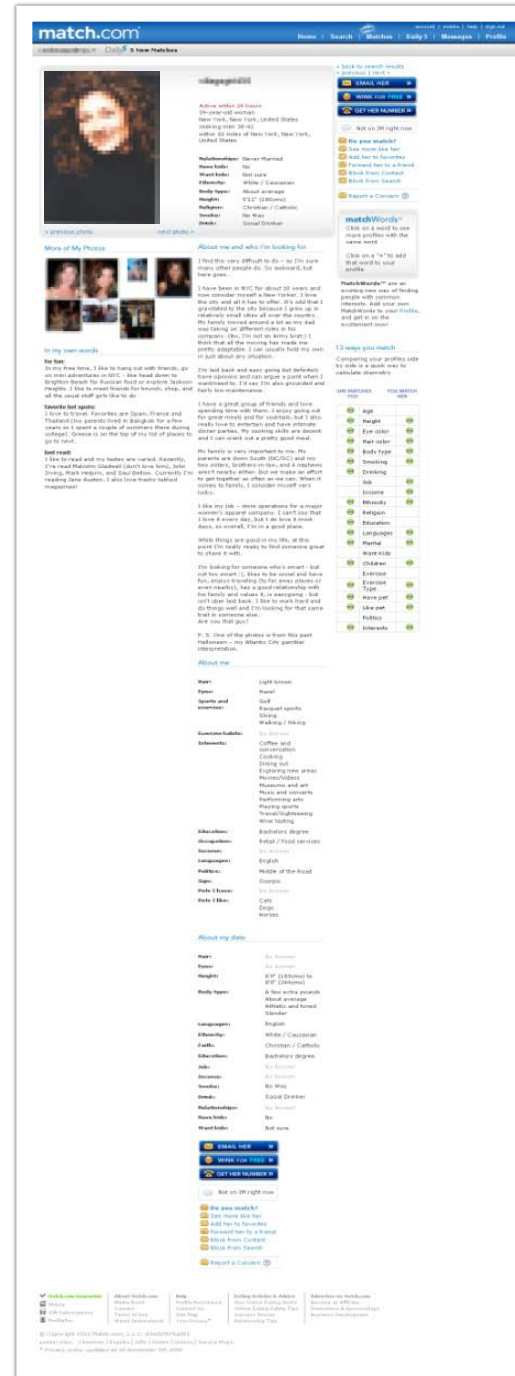
- > The information provided in this section was not thought to be as useful (as on Match's equivalent "free text" sections). This was due to the "formulaic feel" that parts of it conveyed which tended to result in:
 - (a) Significant repetition in answers to several sections, which was noted after users had read many profiles. This seems to suggest that it is not a good way of helping a person differentiate themselves.
 - (b) Masking of subtleties between people due to limited number of canned answers to some sub-sections.
 - (c) Sub-sections like One Thing That Only [the person's] Best Friends Know... were generally thought to be a bit "hokey."
- > The [Person] Typically Spends Her Leisure Time: in the My Interests sub-section was thought to be reasonably effective as it was very open ended.
- > As with Match, when users do not complete a significant number of sub-sections it conveyed a very poor impression as it suggests little effort is being made to seriously engage with the process.

Profile Perceptions

Match.com

Which profile is easier to assess for potential compatibility?

- After learning how users assessed individual profiles, we were interested in how users compared their judgment versus those selected by the computer.
- The details in this example are illustrative of issues raised by many of the Match users (both male and female) the specific points were repeated often.
- Match users generally felt they were more confident about assessing the potential of a match with a profile of the type on the left versus that on the right. Reasons given included:
 - (a) There are more pictures
 - (b) More “free-text” sections have been completed
 - (c) More detailed information has been provided in the About Me And Who I Am Looking For section (middle column)
 - (d) The user appears to be more specific about what they are looking for in a date



Profile Perceptions | Match.com

Effectiveness of computer matching?

- We also asked all of the Match users to talk about their perceptions of the “computer” matching offered on this site.
- A few users said they paid attention to the Number Of Ways You Match Section. But none felt that this was an indication of good “chemistry,” as claimed in the introductory paragraph. At best, they felt it might be considered a rough indicator of common traits each party is looking for.
- However, the majority of Match users appeared to avoid this area altogether (This would seem to be supported by the eye-tracking heatmaps for Match profiles). Typically users felt this indicator was “broken”, “unclear how it works” or simply “too crude” to be useful.

13 ways you match

Comparing your profiles side by side is a quick way to calculate chemistry

20 ways you match

Comparing your profiles side by side is a quick way to calculate chemistry

	SHE MATCHES YOU	YOU MATCH HER
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Height	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Eye color	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hair color	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Body type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Smoking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Drinking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Job	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Income	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Ethnicity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Languages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marital	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Want Kids	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Children	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Exercise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Exercise Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Have pet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Like pet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Politics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interests	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Profile Perceptions | Match.com

Effectiveness of computer matching?

➤ Several users assumed that the information in the About Me and About My Date sections (red border) was used to determine which “green lights” are displayed. However, several questions were raised which diminished confidence in its value:

(a) If several interests (e.g. multiple kinds of exercise) are indicated by both the Match user and on a matching profile, what constitutes a match? All interests have to match, only 1 from each side?

(b) If “no answer” is given for a particular criteria how can it generate a “green light”? Therefore, anomalies arise where with less information supplied the profile on the right suggests a higher level of “chemistry” than the profile on the left for the same Match member.

(c) Not all “green lights” are considered equal. E.g. Eye color compared to Wants Kids.

13 ways you match

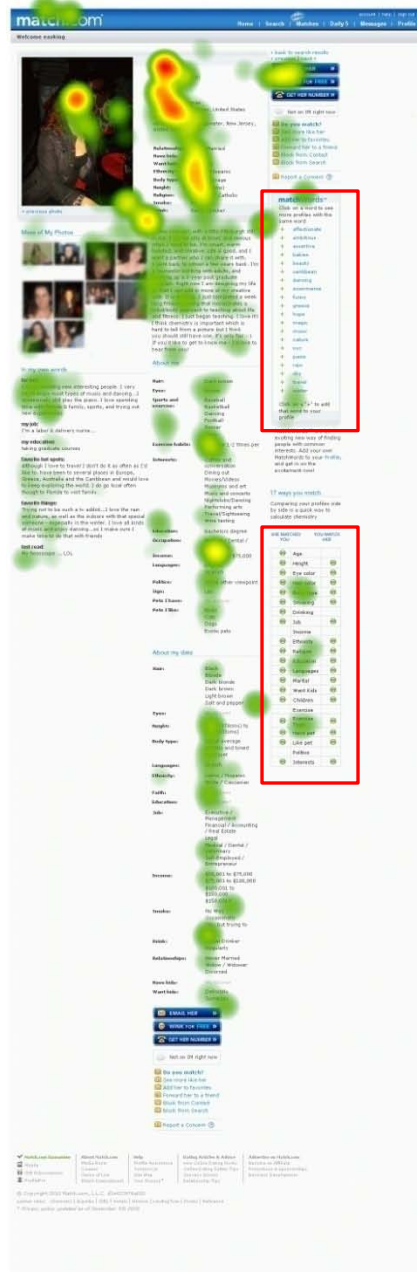
20 ways you match

	SHE MATCHES YOU	YOU MATCH HER
Age	Green Light	Green Light
Height	Green Light	Green Light
Eye color	Green Light	Green Light
Hair color	Green Light	Green Light
Body type	Green Light	Green Light
Smoking	Green Light	Green Light
Drinking	Green Light	Green Light
Job	Green Light	Green Light
Income	Green Light	Green Light
Ethnicity	Green Light	Green Light
Religion	Green Light	Green Light
Education	Green Light	Green Light
Languages	Green Light	Green Light
Marital	Green Light	Green Light
Want Kids	Green Light	Green Light
Children	Green Light	Green Light
Exercise	Green Light	Green Light
Exercise Type	Green Light	Green Light
Have pet	Green Light	Green Light
Like pet	Green Light	Green Light
Politics	Green Light	Green Light
Interests	Green Light	Green Light

Profile Perceptions | Match.com

Where do users spend their time looking on a Match profile?

- We were particularly interested in seeing if there was any difference in attention paid to where users directed their attention on the Match profiles. This was because we wanted to see if users paid more attention to the areas we called “the personal touches” (e.g. free-text, photos) as compared to the “computer matching” tools such as the Number Of Ways You Match Area (lower red box) and the Match Words (upper red box).
- We created some hybrid profiles (one for men and one for women) and asked participants to imagine that their respective match profile had been selected for them. Users were told that it did not make any difference whether they ultimately were interested in the match or not. What we were interested in is understanding how they assessed their match. Users were allowed to spend as much time as they wanted reviewing the profile.
- The results support what users told about their assessment process in as much as they paid attention to the “personal touches” as opposed to the “computer matching” tools which received comparatively very little attention.



Profile Perceptions | eHarmony

Which profile is easier to assess for potential compatibility?

- > eHarmony users felt the assessment process was much more effective for profiles that were more complete.
- > As the eHarmony matching process is hidden from users, they only have the information provided in a match's profile to determine if they want to start communicating with that person. The profile on the left clearly delivers more information to a potential match.

Effectiveness of computer matching?

- > We also asked all of the eHarmony users to talk about their reliance on the "computer" matching offered on this site.
- > There was strong consensus amongst all of the users we spoke to that eHarmony's claim to match people on the basis of "29 levels of compatibility" was good marketing. However, eH users said that they did not feel that the matching algorithm was any better than those offered by other dating sites, as there was no feedback as to where the exact areas of compatibility are. The idea of "just trusting the system" was not appealing. Furthermore, for most users the guided communication process was not thought to be significantly better than simply emailing a prospective date.
- > The main reason for using the service was "it's another pool of potential matches" although most felt that eH users seemed more focused on longer term relationships.

The screenshot shows a detailed eHarmony profile for a user named 'Carmie'. The profile includes a large profile picture, a bio, and various sections such as 'Basic Information', 'In my own words', 'The most influential person in my life has been:', 'The three things which I am most thankful for:', 'The one thing I wish MORE people would notice about me is:', 'The things I can't live without are:', 'The first thing people notice about Carmie is:', 'Some additional information I wanted you to know is:', 'My interests', 'The last book I read and enjoyed:', 'According to my friends:', and 'One thing that only my best friends know is:'. The profile is well-structured and provides a lot of personal information.

The screenshot shows a less detailed eHarmony profile for a user named 'Susan'. The profile includes a profile picture, a bio, and sections for 'Basic Information', 'In my own words', 'My interests', and 'According to my friends:'. The profile is less structured and provides less personal information compared to the 'Carmie' profile.

Phase 3: Communication

The eHarmony Way

Communication | eHarmony.com

Icebreakers

- Assuming a profile is of interest, an eHarmony user may initiate contact by sending an “icebreaker” which is a list of predetermined answers.
- Most users thought this was a poor way to facilitate communication with a match; many users said they didn’t use this option as they felt it was “cheesy” and “silly.” A few users said they had received one and had responded, only to never hear back.

About Me | **Icebreakers** | Mailbox | [Personality Profile](#)

Hi! **Hi!** **Send an Icebreaker to** [blurred]

See something you like? Whether you want to know more or simply want to let someone know you're interested, Icebreakers are a quick and easy way to communicate your feelings. You can send 1 Icebreaker per match absolutely free.

Interested? Choose the message you want to send to [blurred] today:

Let's get to know each other using Guided Communication first. ▾

Send Icebreaker

Note: Limit 1 Icebreaker per match.

Icebreakers (Screenshot Needed)

Communication | eHarmony.com

The 4 Steps of Guided Communication

> Step 1: Get to Know Each Other

A user initiates contact by choosing 5 questions from a list of 57 questions and sends them to a prospective match. Assuming the interest is mutual, the prospect will send his/her top 5 questions.

The screenshot shows the eHarmony 'Guided Communication' interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'About Me', 'Icebreakers', and 'Mailbox', along with a 'Premium Personality Profile' link. Below this, a progress bar indicates four steps: 1. Get to know each other (active), 2. Must Haves & Can't Stands, 3. Learn more about her, and 4. eHarmony Mail. The main content area is titled 'Get to know Her' and includes a 'Return to My Matches' link. A text block explains that the user is selecting questions from a previous communication. Below this are two buttons: 'Send Questions' (orange) and 'Edit'. A list of five questions is displayed, each with a 'View Choices' button and a dropdown arrow:

1. How often do you lose your temper?
2. When in a relationship, how much personal space do you generally find you need?
3. Which of the following marriage issues do you fear most?
4. What best describes your parents' relationship towards each other.
5. Where do you see yourself living in 15 years?

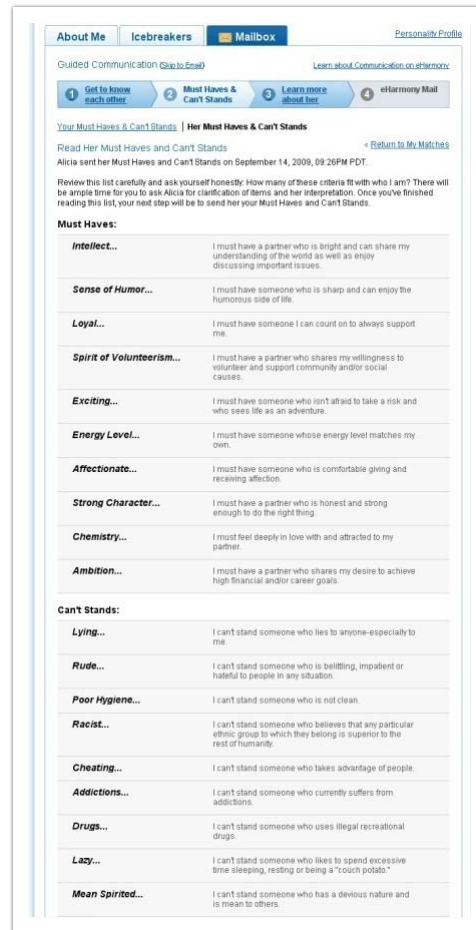
Step 1: Get To Know Each Other

Communication | eHarmony.com

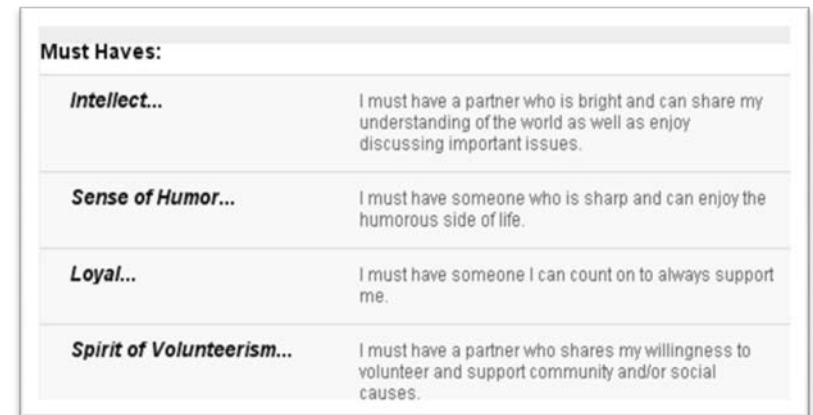
The 4 Steps of Guided Communication

> Step 2: Must Haves & Can't Stands

Users exchange each other's respective lists of "Must Haves & Can't Stands."



Step 2: Must Haves & Can't Stands



Examples of Must Haves



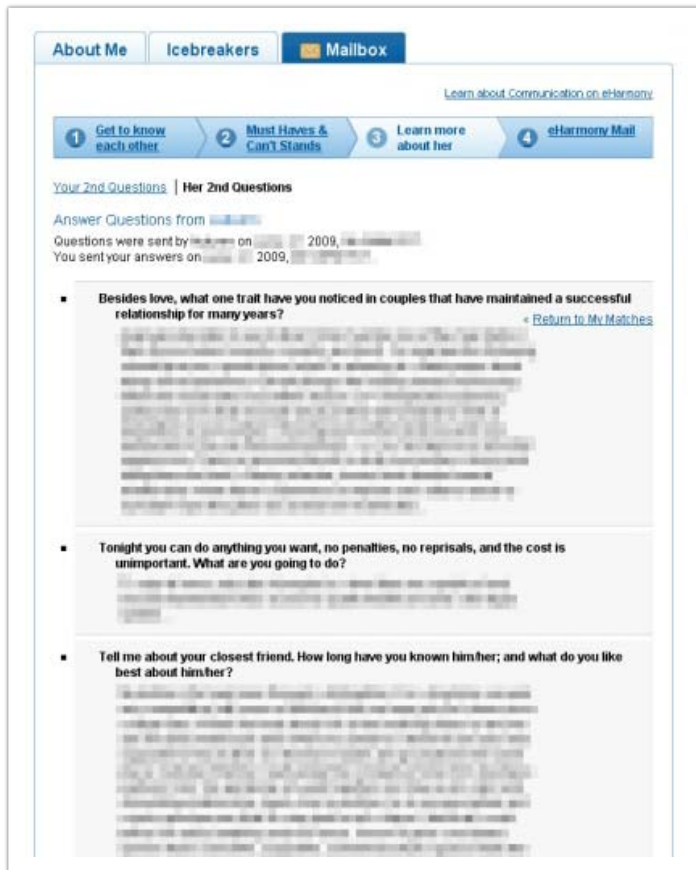
Examples of Can't Stands

Communication | eHarmony.com

The 4 Steps of Guided Communication

> **Step 3: Learn More About Each Other**

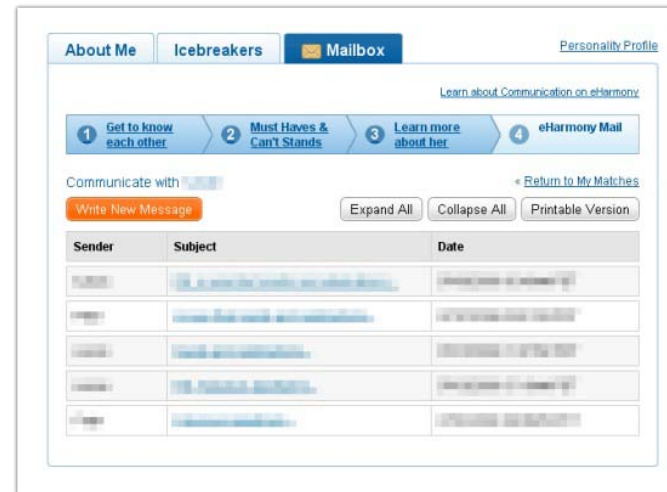
Users write in their own answers to 3 “free response” questions.



Step 3: Learn More About Each Other

> **Step 4: eHarmony Mail**

Users begin exchanging standard e-mail messages with each other.

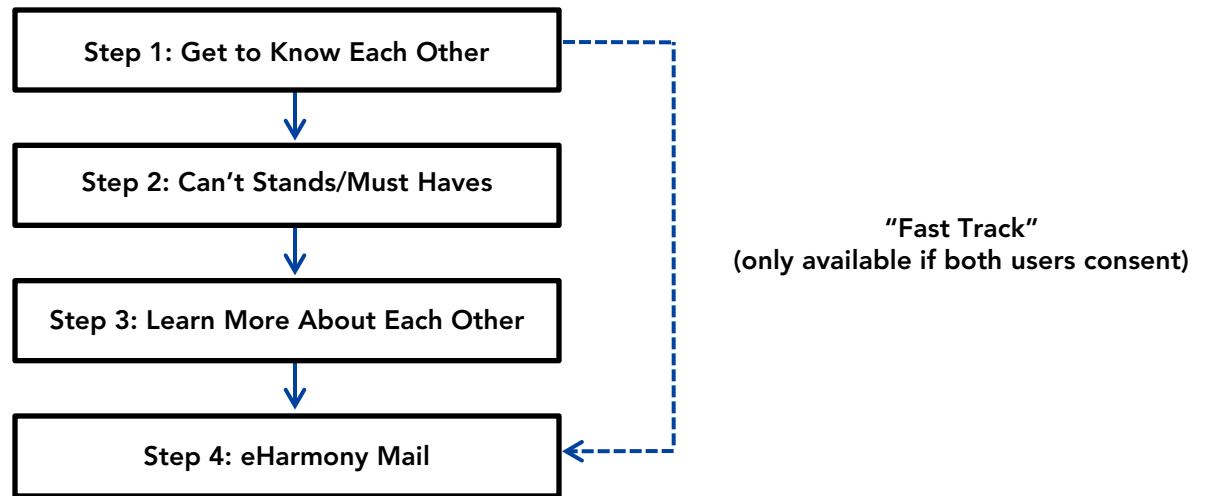


Step 4: eHarmony Mail

Communication | eHarmony.com

> **“Fast Track”**

Users also have the option to skip steps 2 and 3 and communicate directly with a prospect.



Communication | eHarmony.com

User Reaction to the 4 Steps

- Reactions were mixed about eHarmony’s communication process. Several users who described themselves as less confident and comfortable with online dating liked the guided communication as it helped them get to know a person more deeply before meeting them.

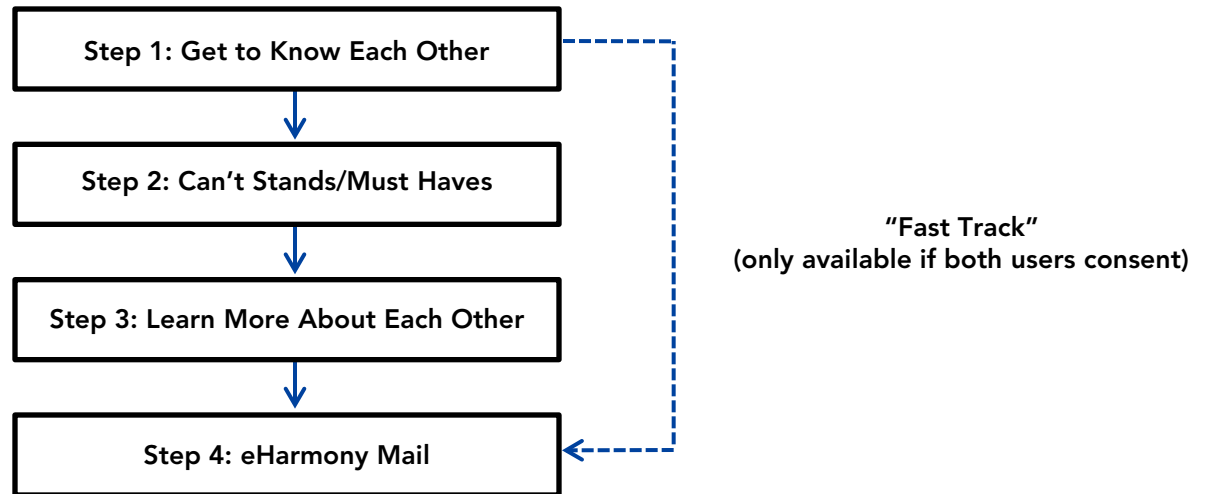
“I need a longer lead time back and forth. It gives me time to rethink.”

“I like that it allows me to discuss things that are important rather than just starting with free form e-mail.”

- However, many users who had completed the process a number of times felt it was cumbersome and mechanical, especially if there was a high volume of matches and that it could take at least a few weeks to reach step 4 (e-mail).

“It’s painstaking. I cut and paste my answers.”

- Several users felt the list of questions in Step 1 and the list of Must Haves/Can’t Stands in Step 2 were too general and “robotic” – that they lacked a personal touch and didn’t help them learn more about a person.

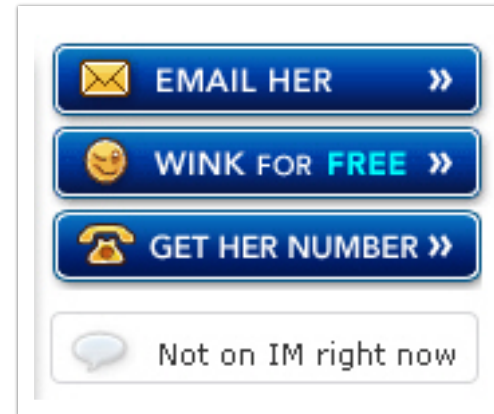


The Match.com Way

Communication | Match.com

Email/Wink/Get a Number

- These functions are one of the more notable differences between Match and eHarmony. Specifically, Match makes these tools available on all profiles so potential matches can start communicating immediately.
- Several users pointed out that they “don’t do winks” (neither sending them nor paying much attention to them if received). The main reason given was that they did not consider winks to be as serious an indicator of interest in a potential match (as they are so easy to send, requiring nothing more than a button press) as compared to a few well chosen words in an email which requires much more effort.



Communications Options
(Email, Wink, Get Her Number, IM)