Joining an online gay/bi men’s community or social networking site/app like Grindr, Manhunt, Jack’d, Scruff, Squirt, A4A etc. can be a great way to meet new guys. It’s convenient for places where it’s hard to meet gay/bi guys and it’s an efficient way to get right to the point. Here are some tips to help make your experience even better!

1. **Do YOU!**
Even though you might feel pressure within online communities to ‘bareback’, ‘party-n-play’, “be able to meet now” or to simply hook-up does not mean that is what most guys are doing or what you have to do.

2. **KNOW WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR**
People go online for all sorts of reasons. Be clear about you want. A picture of your naked torso next to a sentence saying “just want to chat” or “just friends” might be confusing for people. Moreover, feeling unclear about what you want could make you more susceptible to going along with something that’s not right for you.

3. **FEELING LONELY?**
Hook up apps or sites might not be the best place for you. Although it’s not impossible, a hook up you met online won’t often turn into something more. If you’re looking for a deeper connection, consider putting that out there on your profile, using a more social or dating oriented site like meetup.com or okcupid.com, joining a gay/bi men’s support group at the Pacific Center or elsewhere, volunteering for a LGBT-related project, or doing something else that helps you meet guys with similar interests.

4. **SOMEONE BOTHERING YOU? BLOCK HIM.**
If you do not find someone appealing, if someone won’t stop messaging you, or someone is being rude: block him. Perhaps he thinks you’re not getting his messages or perhaps he’s trying to harass you; either way you have options.

5. **REJECTION.**
Similarly, it’s easy to be rejected and to reject on these sites and apps. Hundreds of men are reduced to a few lines of information and a few small pictures. It is impossible to give everyone an honest chance. Don’t take it personally if someone blocks or ignores you; it’s not a statement about your worth as a person.

6. **BE COURTEOUS AND RESPECTFUL**
The online community is full of bullies, and hurtful language. Racially charged phrases or ones like “No fats, no femmes. Be masc!” are hurtful, offensive and derogatory. Be mindful of how you share your preferences, and also try not to take what people say online personally. Finally, if you’re not interested in someone for whatever reason, block him or simply tell him.

7. **BE HONEST ABOUT WHO YOU ARE**
If you are planning on meeting up with someone, be honest about who you are. Send him unmodified and recent pictures or information about yourself.
8. IS HE REAL? FIND OUT.
Make sure he is really who he says he is. Ask for his phone number, text him and have him text back. If you are uncomfortable giving him your real number, create a Google voice or Skype account. Ask for his Facebook profile if he has one.

9. MEET IN A PUBLIC PLACE FIRST
The first time you meet someone, be extra cautious about safety and meet in a public place like a café or bar. If it’s 2am or 3am and you can’t find someplace that’s open, meet at a gas station that has cameras or some way of being spotted.

10. MAKE SURE SOMEONE KNOWS WHERE YOU ARE
It might be as simple as a text/email to a friend, or leaving a note for your roommate telling them where you will be. It is important that SOMEONE knows where you are besides you and your new friend. Consider leaving the number and name of the person you are meeting, too.

11. BE ALERT
If you go over to someone’s place, take a look around. Is there anything that makes you feel uneasy? If you’re drinking, watch him pour you a drink to make sure he does not pour anything into it, or doesn’t give you too much.

12. WANT TO BACK OUT? YOU CAN.
Is your gut telling you something is off? He doesn’t look like his pictures? If you agreed to meet up or do something online and you decide you don’t want to, you don’t have to. You don’t owe him anything. State your feelings using clear, direct, firm words and body language.

13. TAKING CARE OF YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH
It’s important to ask questions about how a potential hookup takes care of his sexual health. Asking these tricky questions over chat or text before you meet up can take some of the pressure off. Be specific. Ask, “What have you been tested for? When did you get tested?” And of course, using condoms and lube correctly helps protect you from STIs.

14. CAN’T GET OFF YOUR PHONE?
If you’re one of those guys that’s attached to his phone even while out with friends, you might be missing out on not only amazing experiences but also meeting great guys in person. Try to put your phone away and enjoy the moment, even if it means staying logged on and checking the messages later. Feeling consumed by apps and want that to change? It is totally legitimate to seek help. For UC Berkeley students, consider meeting with a counselor in Social Services to discuss how to reduce your use. All UCB students get five free counselor sessions per year.

This resource is developed by Berkeley Builds Capacity for the Do YOU! campaign. For more information about how to stay safe navigate to: http://uhs.berkeley.edu/bbc/havingsex.shtml.

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