

## How to Write a Great Personals Ad

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*Webster's defines an "advertisement" as: "A public statement of something offered or wanted."*

**It's All in Your Head!** The first key to a successful ad is the heading. People often quickly scan the bold lettering to determine which offerings merit a closer look. A few inviting words or a catchy phrase will draw the reader in. Shock value can sometimes be an effective eye-catcher, but might scare away an equal number of potentially interesting prospects.

Here are two examples of great headings I noticed in the personals some time ago:

- "Petite and perky, cute and quirky."
- "Ask me anything."

**You Gotta Be You.** The body of a great personals ad will outline the traits you are looking for and highlight your own best features. However, you should reveal only as much information about yourself as is required to entice prospects to find out more. In this sense, the personals ad is similar to a résumé: It gets your foot in the door. It is during the face-to-face interview that true potential is assessed. As Josey Vogels, nationally syndicated columnist and author of *Dating: A Survival Guide from the Frontlines*, says: "It's called a personals ad for a reason—make it personal! Make yourself stand out from all those people who like long walks on the beach and dining out. Include details that reveal the quirks and charm of your personality. What's your favorite part of dining out? What do you like about walking on the beach? How do you feel about cheese? That kind of thing."

**Be Smart and Funny.** Consistently, in surveys about attractiveness in a mate, the top two qualities sought by both genders are intelligence and a sense of humor. Both of these traits can be showcased quite easily by a few well-crafted lines that will capture the targeted readers' interest.

**Show Don't Tell.** It's much more effective to compose a clever and witty ad than to say, "I am bright and funny." For instance, your ad could be made up entirely of movie or song titles cleverly linked together to form sentences. Or you could write your ad in verse or as a word puzzle, a shopping list or a recipe.

**Avoid Jargon.** *SWM looking for SWFWBB of course, decodes as "Shy Wandering Minstrel looking for Sweet, Wealthy Farmer With Bad Breath."* Don't do it.

**Be Honest.** Truth in advertising applies... Don't try to sell something you're not!

# Four Profiles/Ads For The Personals

No matter your age, gender or interests, there are ways to make your own ad stand out from the rest. Here are four examples:

EXAMPLE#1: Single romantic woman, early 20s, Elvis lover:

## **"Don't Be Cruel"**

Are you lonesome tonight? Want to Love Me Tender and Be My Teddy Bear? Then I Can't Help Falling in Love with you. But, please stay away if you're All Shook Up, the Devil in Disguise, want to Step On My Blue Suede Shoes, or frequent the Heartbreak Hotel.

EXAMPLE #2: Artsy, divorced woman, late 40s:

## **"Aging Hippie Seeks Kindred Spirit"**

Political activist who loves granola and long walks, wears flowered skirts with Birkenstocks, and enjoys movies, seeks original thinker. I protest wars, and carnivores, and try to think outside the box. Republicans need not apply.

EXAMPLE #3: 20-something male actor:

## **"Casting Call"**

Single male SEEKS FEMALE LEAD for real-life drama/comedy; must play opposite fun-loving, athletic, West Coast type. Scenes include beach-going, dancing, surfing, and drives to the coast. Practice your lines and write me.

## **YOUR ASSIGNMENT:**

Write your own personal ad for the perfect **school** or **job** after graduation. You will have to consider both what you have to offer a potential college or employer, as well as what you're looking for after graduation. Questions to consider:

- How would you describe yourself in only a few words?
- What type of environment are you looking for? (urban, suburban, rural)
- What do you want to study or what job do you want to do?
- What co-curriculars or sports are available?
- Are there school exchange or study abroad programs?
- What size of school or company is preferable to you?
- Is there opportunity for advancement at a particular job?
- How much money do you have to spend on college?
- What kind of job salary are you looking for?
- What is the social or political atmosphere on campus (liberal or conservative? fraternities?)

Sample ad:

## **BOHO Girl Seeks Like-Minded School**

Compassionate, artistic, and diligent young woman searching for progressive, community-oriented, small college, preferably on the east coast. College should offer outstanding programs in English, art, and theatre with classes in sociology and psychology. Picturesque campus and location near a city preferred. Diversity of student body a plus! Large universities with big Greek scenes need not apply.