



entertainment guide

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Hi my name is buzzzz! Dinner?

Betty Beard
The Arizona Republic
Oct. 17, 2003 12:00 AM

On your mark. Get set. Date!

You get three, six or maybe eight minutes to size up the other person and see if there are sparks or just ice.

That's speed dating, a musical-chair type game that has been growing rapidly throughout the country since 2001 and is now splitting into niches, such as women who want younger men, Christians, movie lovers, adults without children, or athletes.

Participants like it because it's quick and cheap - generally \$35 to \$40 for an evening - and provides busy people a chance to meet datable people in a few hours and makes it easy to reject people you don't want to date.

Scottsdale is the hot spot for speed dating in the Phoenix area, but two recent events were held in Chandler and two are coming up in Tempe.

"Everything in America has to be fast and efficient," said Karen Cohen, 35, a Scottsdale physical therapist who got about half a dozen dates but nothing long lasting from two functions by Pre-Dating Events, of Fort Lauderdale. "People don't want to go out and do the work. So they want someone to do it for them."

Participants who speed date have to sign up ahead of time, and generally women sign up faster than men. At the event, couples are paired up and, depending what company is hosting the event, spend three to eight minutes visiting with each other.

At the sound of a buzzer or bell, they rotate to the next blind matchup.

During the evening, participants mark on a card who they would like to see again. At the end of the evening or next day, they learn who wants to date them.

Hosting companies have different theories on which is better, fewer meetings up to eight minutes apiece, or up to 25 three-



Dave Cruz/The Arizona Republic

Kurt McBrayen of Mesa and Sharon Blount of Chandler are participating in an 8Minutedating of Boston event at Z Tejas in Chandler.

Quick, need a date?

These companies sponsor speed dating parties in the Phoenix area, with dates ranging from three to eight minutes. Some events may be full. Keep watching Web sites.

• 8minuteDating.com

Details: www.8minuteDating.com

Upcoming events :

Single professionals ages 28-38 at 6 p.m. Oct. 23, Devil's Martini, 4175 N. Goldwater Blvd., Scottsdale. \$35.

Wine tasting and singles party ages 28-35 at 6 p.m. Nov. 5, Sushi N' Rock, 15111 Hayden Road, Scottsdale. \$50.

• FastDater Inc.

Details: www.fastdater.com

Upcoming events:

Men and women ages 35-50 at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 29, Earl's Restaurant on Pima, 15784 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. \$35.

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minute dates.

Some sponsors say three minutes is enough time to decide if you're with a loser and eight minutes is excruciatingly long if you realize you are with a loser. Others say three minutes only provides about enough time to decide if you have a physical attraction.

Most events are offered for people 25 to 35, but sometimes functions are held for those up to 50 and older.

A quick online search found 16 speed-dating events sponsored by five national companies at nightclubs and restaurants in the Phoenix area this month and next.

Cohen, who now volunteers to help at Pre-Dating events, explained that Scottsdale gets so many because it is a popular place for singles and has nice clubs and restaurants.

Speed daters aren't always looking for love. Sometimes, men and women use the functions to look for new friends or even business contacts.

"You don't have to find a love connection," said Kurt McBrayer, 40, a Mesa salesman who made some business contacts at two functions by 8minuteDating.com, of Boston. McBrayer also met one woman he dated four times.

"It was a blast. It was like a big organized happy hour with a game," he said after his first speed-dating event.

Debbie Clevenger, 50, an Ahwatukee Foothills teacher, did not get any matches from a recent 8minuteDating event but said, "I thought it was nice. At least you met somebody. . . . You didn't have to worry about carrying on a conversation with someone you didn't even want to have a friendship with."

Georgia Gunther, 47, a Peoria computer technician, recently drove 41 miles from her home to an 8minuteDating function for 40- to 50-year-olds in Chandler and got a date out of it.

"It went pretty well. But after the first four of those things (visits with men), I was ready to go home. It was exhausting. It was more like a drill. I felt like I was in a job interview," Gunther said.

She met eight men and connected with No. 7 after learning he felt the same way.

"He plopped down and said, 'I just can't do this anymore. I don't care what you do for a living. I don't care how many kids you have.' He and I spent Saturday together."

● **HurryDate**

Details: www.hurrydate.com

Upcoming events:

Men and women ages 25-35 at 7 p.m. Oct. 22; SIX, 7316 E. Stetson Drive, Scottsdale, \$37.

Christian men and women, 25-35, at 7 p.m. Oct. 29, SIX, \$37.

Men and women ages 25-35 at 7 p.m. Nov. 5, SIX, \$37.

Men and women, 40 plus, at 7 p.m. Nov. 11, Eli's American Grille, 7000 E. Shea Blvd., Scottsdale, \$37.

Women, 30-40; men, 35-45, at 7 p.m. Nov. 12, SIX, \$37.

Gay men, 21-40, 7 p.m. Nov. 18, Amsterdam, 718 N. Central Ave., Phoenix. \$37.

Men and women age 25-35 at 7 p.m. Nov. 19; SIX, \$37.

● **Pre-Dating Events**

Details: www.pre-dating.com

Upcoming events :

Men, 39-50; women, 33-44, at 6:20 p.m. Oct. 20, downtown Scottsdale location pending, \$36.

Single professionals ages 27-37 at 8:30 p.m., Oct. 20, Scottsdale location pending, \$36.

Single professionals, women, 38-51; men, 40-53, at 6:20 p.m. Nov. 17, location pending, \$34 to \$39.

Single professionals, women, 26-37; men, 28-39, at 8:30 p.m. Nov. 17, Scottsdale location pending, \$34-\$39.

● **Speedmatching**

Details: www.speedmatching.com

Upcoming events :

Men and women ages 35-47 at 6-9:30 p.m. Oct. 22, Six Shooters Sports Bar & Grill, 705 S. Rural Road, Tempe. \$25

Men appear more reluctant to sign up for speed-dating functions and are more likely to sign up at the last minute. At the recent 8minute function, most men refused to be identified. "If my friends knew I was here, I'd be in big trouble," one said.

members; \$40 non-members.

Men and women ages 23-35 at 6:30-9:30 p.m., Nov. 11; Bash on Ash, 230 W. Fifth St., Tempe. \$25 members; \$40 non-members.

Another, an Ahwatukee Foothills salesman, said he attended because he is intensely shy and figured the event would help him gain confidence.

Mindy Badley, 39, of Glendale, said, "I wish more guys would get into this. Every girl I have seen is beautiful," she said of Pre-Dating functions she helps run. "It's less of a stigma for women. But it's much easier for guys. It's so much easier for them than going to a bar and having to be on."

It's unknown how many fast-track relationships stick. But companies are starting to report a few engagements.

"We've had eight engagements and one marriage so far," said Adele Testani, a founder of HurryDate of New York City, which has about 2,400 events a year and has set up 1.3 million dates. "We love when that happens."

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