



52[®]

Cheap Dates

at Home



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The background is a solid orange color with several red, five-pointed stars scattered across it. Various items are scattered around the central text: a purple blindfold with a green patterned strap is in the top left; a blue pencil with white patterns is in the top right; a purple pencil with a white pattern is in the middle right; a green pencil with white patterns is in the bottom left; a purple pencil with a white pattern is in the middle left; a green blindfold with purple polka dots and a purple patterned strap is in the middle right; and several white dice with black pips are scattered throughout, including one in the top right, two in the bottom left, and one in the bottom right.

Taste Test

Re-create a scene from the movie *9½ Weeks*, and give your partner a blindfolded taste test (sitting in front of the refrigerator is optional). Get a combination of foods ready in bite-size pieces. Think different temperatures and textures: sweet, sour, and savory; icy and warm; combos of different foods at the same time. Oh, and don't let your date feed themselves—you place the food in their mouth so they don't have a chance to identify it by touch.

The background is a light pink color with a collage of various objects. At the top left is a white speech bubble with a purple heart. To its right is a green checkered coffee cup. Further right is an orange checkered coffee cup on a purple saucer with white polka dots. In the center, there are two white banners with black text. Below the banners are several other items: a red polka-dot flower with green leaves, a round clock with a white face and orange dots, a purple coffee cup, an orange polka-dot coffee cup on a green saucer, a green checkered flower with red polka-dot leaves, and a white speech bubble with a red heart at the bottom right.

Hairdos

and Tattoos

Take turns playing hairstylist. Comb, brush, tease, and style each other's hair—the crazier the better. If you happen to have spiky gel or temporary hair color, put them to good use. Then decide on a tattoo for each of you, and use a soft gel or ballpoint pen to “ink” on some crazy designs.



Naked

and Free

Perhaps it's been a while since you walked around joyfully naked. Open the windows (and shut the blinds), strip off those tight-fitting garments, and experience the simple pleasure of fresh air on your skin. Put on some music and dance; or just do your household chores in the buff! (But no cooking, please!)



Culture

Vulture

Join the intelligentsia and attend a virtual live cultural event you've never been to before: a ballet or modern dance presentation, an opera, performance art, a classical or jazz concert, live theater—these are now all available online. If you want to buy tickets and truly attend live, go for it, but the recorded live events have immediacy and excitement as well. Either way, dress up as though you're going out, and applaud along with the audience!

The background is a light pink color. It features two wine bottles with green bodies and purple necks and labels. The labels have white scribbled patterns. There are four glasses of wine: two tall, thin flutes and two shorter, wider glasses. The wine is a reddish-orange color. Scattered around are several strawberries, some orange with white dots and green leaves, and some purple with white dots and green leaves. There are also small orange starburst shapes.

Foods

of the World

Choose a cuisine you've never cooked before, and create a theme-night dinner. Shop in advance for any ingredients you'll need, and make the meal together, learning as you go. Decorate your table with colors or objects that reflect the culture or region that cuisine originates from. After dinner, choose a subtitled movie in that region's language to continue with your theme. (Subtitles allow you to hear the beauty and inflection of the native tongue!)

The background is a textured orange color with several red, five-pointed stars scattered across it. Various game-related items are cut out and pasted onto the background. At the top left is a purple blindfold with a green patterned strap. To its right is a blue pencil with a white eraser and a green band. Further right is a single white die with black pips. Below the purple blindfold is a white rectangular piece of paper with the word "Games" written in a black serif font. Below that is another white rectangular piece of paper with the words "People Play" written in the same black serif font. To the right of the "People Play" paper is a purple blindfold with a green patterned strap and purple polka dots. Below the purple blindfold are three white dice with black pips. At the bottom left is a green pencil with a white eraser. At the bottom right is a single white die with black pips.

Games

People Play

Armed with all your favorite board games, plan an afternoon or evening marathon of game playing. Place bets and play for money (hey, you can always use pennies or play money). You can even spice it up by trying out “strip” versions. (Strip Monopoly? Scrabble? It “Boggles” the mind!)



The Sun

Also Rises

Just about everyone has gone on a date to watch the sun set. Turn the idea on its head and make a date to watch the sun *rise*. Think about the best location to catch the view eastward (even your front porch), and set an alarm to ring before the sun comes up. Take an insulated coffee carafe and a couple of mugs outside, and snuggle in your pj's as you watch the sky turn from dark to light. Listen for the birds too.



Henry

and June

Buy a special notebook and pen with which to compose erotica together. For literary inspiration, you may want to read some of Anaïs Nin's work aloud (or perhaps you have some other favorites to share). Compose together, or take turns writing paragraphs and then folding over what you've written except for the last sentence, which the other person then continues. Read the whole thing aloud, taking turns to read the other's work.



Different

Perspective

Be an artist for a day. Each of you look out a different window and paint, draw, or sketch what you see. Or, you can each choose a different corner of the house to draw an interior or still life.

A stylized illustration on a light pink background. It features two green wine bottles with purple labels and textured necks. There are four champagne flutes filled with a bubbly orange liquid. Several strawberries, some orange with white dots and some purple with white dots, are scattered around. Small orange starburst shapes are also present. Two white banners with black text are overlaid on the scene.

Bench

Brunch

On your balcony or in your backyard, have a brunch date complete with bagels, coffee, and the Sunday paper. Try to gather everything you need beforehand so you don't have to interrupt the mood once you settle in. Relax and read the funnies, do the crossword, or look at the travel section and imagine where you can go. Mimosas optional!



Twenty



Questions

Both of you write down 20 personal questions on separate scraps of paper. Fold up your questions and drop them into different bowls, then take turns pulling a question out of your date's bowl and answering it. Each of you can exercise the option not to answer *one* question.



Time

Capsule

During the course of a particular day (or weekend), gather artifacts that are small but representative of how you spent the time together. Place them all in a can or jar with your names, the occasion (e.g., “A perfect summer weekend”), and the date, and bury it somewhere outside. What would you like people in the year 2525 to know about dating or relationships in the present day?



Celluloid

Fantasy

Each of you pick out 5 movies that contain the hottest or most devastatingly romantic scenes. Fast forward to all the best parts and watch them back-to-back. Then, after what will hopefully be a very heated debate, decide on the scene (or scenes, if you can't choose) you consider the best, and act it out.

Get a big block of clay or make your own. Cover a table with newspaper or drop cloths and put on an old shirt in preparation for getting elbow deep in clay. Try building a sculpture together, or take turns being the model and master sculptor.

An illustration on a light pink background featuring two green bottles with purple labels, several tall glasses filled with a reddish-orange liquid, and several strawberries. The text is presented on two white, torn-edge paper strips. The top strip contains the word 'Bake' in a black serif font. The bottom strip contains the words 'a Cake' in a black serif font, with 'a' in italics.

Bake

a Cake

Have yourselves a real sweet date by preparing the best-sounding or most-challenging dessert recipe, one you might have never tackled alone. Make your outrageous creation from scratch as the evening's entertainment. After dinner, your glorious experiment is waiting for you to devour it!



Hunting



Party

Make up a scavenger hunt in your own home by exchanging lists of items to search for, uncover, and discover around the house. Things to find can be as simple (a fork, a paper clip) or as complicated (a hidden earring, a 1999 penny) as you like. Exchange lists, and the winner gets to choose what movie to watch and what to have for dinner.



Inner

Child

Make an afternoon of all the things you loved to do as children. You might watch cartoons, draw or paint, create a hopscotch path using sidewalk chalk, play marbles or tic-tac-toe, or eat peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches or ice cream (oh, and be sure to get it all over your face!).



Home

Health Spa

Turn your bathroom and living room into a day spa! Gather fresh, fluffy towels and robes, a homemade facial cleanser or beauty mask, and a bucket to soak your feet. Stream a zen-like soundtrack and light a scented candle. Put sliced cucumbers on your eyes, take a deep breath, and relax. Maybe later you can trade sensual massage techniques.

Make your Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers fantasies come true by taking an online ballroom dance class or watching an instructional video. Practice a routine, then get dressed in your best finery, put on one of their old films, and simultaneously trip the light fantastic!

An illustration on a light pink background featuring two bottles of sparkling wine. The bottles are dark green with purple labels and textured necks. They are surrounded by several tall, white champagne flutes filled with bubbly pink liquid. Scattered around are several strawberries, some whole and some sliced. The text 'That's Italian' is written in a black serif font on two white, torn-edge paper strips. The top strip contains the word 'That's' and the bottom strip contains the word 'Italian'.

That's

Italian

Making fresh pasta is simpler than you think, yet it is an impressive skill. Find a recipe and mix, roll, and shape some unique pasta designs all your own. Italians name their pastas after common objects like butterflies and shells—why not name your pasta as imaginatively as you can? Cat's paw? Golf ball? Get creative. Serve your creation with a simple sauce and an Italian wine as you stream some opera classics. After dinner, a Fellini film, perhaps? That's amore!

The background is a textured orange color with several red, five-pointed stars scattered across it. Various school supplies are depicted as cutouts: a purple blindfold with a green patterned strap is at the top left; a blue pencil with white floral patterns is at the top right; a purple pencil with a white grid pattern is on the left; a green pencil with a white grid pattern is at the bottom; three white dice with black pips are in the lower-left quadrant; and a green blindfold with purple polka dots and a purple patterned strap is in the lower-right quadrant. Two white, torn-edge paper strips are placed in the center, containing the text 'Double' and 'Feature' respectively.

Double

Feature

Each of you creates a list of the top 5 movies you'd like to watch. Then exchange lists and choose 1 from the other person's list—and there's your double feature for the evening! Pair with popcorn, and try some different seasonings or butters (sweet, savory, or both). Horror and documentary, comedy and thriller, new and old—the combinations are endless.



Language

Arts

Choose a language you'd both like to learn and commit to practicing together for 15 to 20 minutes per day (over dinner perhaps?). Consider choosing the language of the country you'd most like to visit, and plan your vocabulary choices accordingly. Some ideas: "Which way to the airport?"; "Where can we eat dinner?"; "Thank you for your help"; and the ever-popular "Where's the closest hotel?"



Good,

Clean Fun

Make a shower or bath date! Gather all those trial-size bottles you've been saving and get some fluffy towels ready. Hop into the tub or shower, and indulge in some gloriously soapy, good, clean fun. It feels so luxurious to have someone shampoo your hair—and to suds up that spot on your back that you just can't reach.

Find a radio station online that broadcasts from a faraway country. Once you've chosen the country, research the national dish or favorite street foods of the region. Gather the ingredients and make (or order) a themed dinner while you listen. After dinner, push the chairs back and dance your heart out while you imagine you are there. Extra points if you try to figure out what the radio ads are selling!

The background is a light pink color. It features two identical bottles of wine or champagne, one at the top and one at the bottom. The bottles are dark green with a purple label and a purple neck. There are four champagne flutes, two on the left and two on the right, filled with a pinkish-orange liquid. Scattered around are several strawberries, some orange with white dots and some purple with white dots. There are also some small, stylized orange and yellow shapes.

Mad Hatter

Tea Party

Rainy afternoons are perfect for Mad Hatter tea parties. Anything goes with tea, from elegant little cakes to sandwiches with the crusts cut off. Brew a pot of tea and pour it into mismatched mugs or teacups. Wear outlandish outfits and crazy hats. Or, pull out the good china and silver, get dressed up, and have a British high tea (and try your hand at a British accent!).



House



of Cards

Research unusual card games, or just find one that neither of you knows how to play (two-handed bridge, anyone?). Read up on the rules and learn the ins and outs as you become more proficient. It may become a habit!



Time

Travel

Re-create your first date, at home. Did you see a movie? Eat a certain kind of food? Go to a concert? You can replicate most adventures from home. Try to remember what you talked about and what you noticed about the other person. Then re-create your first kiss—or your first *anything*.

A vibrant, hand-drawn poster with a pink background and scattered hearts. The text 'Groovy Body Painting' is written on three white, torn-edge paper strips. The poster is decorated with various colorful illustrations: a teal perfume bottle with a purple swirl, a lit white candle on a purple base, a green camera with a purple lens and orange top, a purple film reel with green frames, a purple perfume bottle with a teal swirl, a purple camera with an orange lens and purple top, a purple film reel with orange frames, and a purple necktie. The overall style is retro and artistic.

Groovy

Body

Painting

This one is a little on the friskier side, so channel your inner hippie or Burning Man fantasies. Get some skin-safe, water-based body paints (available online). Cover a large swath of the floor with drop cloths, and tape down a large sheet of paper (think body-size!). Next, apply different colors of paint to each other's body parts and create your own unique image, either by pressing yourself against the paper or re-creating some of your favorite—ahem—*moments* together. Frame this one and hang it over the bed!

Find a free karaoke website (there are lots of options), and sing the night away. In the classic tradition of teen movies, use a hairbrush or a wooden spoon as a mic and practice your expressive body language. Try a few solos, segue into some duets, and then sing a romantic ballad while staring into each other's eyes.

The image features a light pink background with a central white banner containing the text "Oui, Oui!". Surrounding the banner are two champagne bottles and four glasses. The bottles are dark green with purple labels and foil-wrapped necks. The glasses are tall and slender, filled with a bubbly orange-red liquid. Scattered around the bottles and glasses are several strawberries, some whole and some sliced, along with small decorative starburst and circle motifs.

Oui, Oui!

Plan a Parisian picnic. Think baguettes, cheese, crepes, quiche—or french fries. Don't forget a bottle of sparkling water or wine! Learn a few words of French; you could start with *je t'aime* or *voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir*. Progress to a little French kissing.

The background is a textured orange color with scattered red five-pointed stars. Various school supplies are scattered across the page: a purple pencil with a green eraser, a green pencil with a purple eraser, several dice with black pips, and two pairs of sunglasses. One pair has a purple strap and a green lens with purple polka dots, while the other has a green strap and a purple lens. The title is written on two white, torn-edge paper strips.

When

in Rome

An evening of Roman decadence begins with the costuming—strip the sheets off the bed and wrap yourself and your date in them, toga style. Throw some pillows on the floor for easy reclining, and eat dinner with your hands. Think tearing off chunks of bread and dipping them in olive oil, breaking off bites of cheese, or feeding each other grapes. And the entertainment? Watch an old sand-and-sandals epic, like *Spartacus* or *Ben-Hur*.

The background is a light pink color with various hand-drawn illustrations. At the top left is a white speech bubble with a purple heart. To its right is a green checkered coffee cup. Further right is an orange checkered coffee cup on a purple saucer with white dots. Below these are several colorful leaves in shades of orange, green, and purple. In the center, three white banners with black text read 'Living', 'Room', and 'Campout'. To the right of the banners is a purple clock face with two hands. At the bottom left is a purple coffee cup on an orange saucer, and next to it is an orange coffee cup with green polka dots on a green saucer. At the bottom right is another white speech bubble with a red heart.

Living

Room

Campout

Spend the night in another room in your home. Create a pillow fort (remember how much fun those were?) in the living room, and make a nice cozy bed inside with couch cushions or blankets. At best, you'll enjoy the new perspective; at worst, you'll appreciate your mattress.



Boudoir

Photography

Set up a photo studio in the bedroom, and have a little snap session. Sexy lingerie, props, or suggestive poses are welcome. Take a few sample shots to adjust the lighting for the most romantic ambience (try a scarf over a lamp, or light some candles). Play some music to get in the mood, then shoot away, taking turns as model and photographer. Set up the timer on your phone or camera to take some shots of the both of you.



Poetry

Slam

Each of you writes a poem to the other, praising the other's characteristics, personality, laugh—all the things that make them *unique*. You can endeavor to rhyme, or try the much more forgiving free verse. Try the 5-7-5 syllable setup of a haiku, or write a naughty limerick. If you like what you read, save the poem in a tiny frame and hang it somewhere private.

A stylized illustration on a light pink background. It features two dark green beer bottles with purple labels and necks, each containing a bubbly orange liquid. There are four tall, slender glasses filled with the same bubbly liquid. Scattered around are several strawberries, some orange with white dots and some purple with white dots, all with green leaves. Small orange circles representing bubbles are also present. Two white, torn-edge paper strips are overlaid on the scene, one containing the word 'Brew' and the other 'Crew'.

Brew

Crew

Throw a tasting party by buying some strange new beers and ales in flavors or styles you've never tried before and setting out a row of glasses for a beer flight. You can also make some homemade pretzels as an accompaniment and experiment with flavored mustards. What pairings do you like best? Lederhosen optional.



You

Name It

Come up with names for all the body parts of your loved one, from their nose to their toes and everything in between. See if you can remember each other's pet names as you name more and more. They can be evocative, like *button* for nose, or absurd, like *Steve* for a bicep. You can share the names (both of you have biceps named Steve) or keep them individual.



Get

Smart

Think about a skill or hobby you'd like to learn together, and take an online class, whether in one night or for several weeks. Want to knit? Bake bread? Paint like Bob Ross? There's a class for that!



a Private

Reading

Choose an exciting, sexy book to read together. You can find all kinds of racy books at used bookstores online, or get a copy of the *Kama Sutra* or *The Joy of Sex* to really go back in time. Or if fan-fic is more your taste, find some erotic stories that imagine romance—and much more—between your favorite pop culture icons. Then, if you're feeling inspired, act out some of your favorite scenes.

Choose a medium you like (pencil, pastel, crayon, ink, oil paint) and spend a good hour creating a portrait of your date. Take turns posing and creating, and see what inner beauty your partner captures. Use the same size paper and frame them side by side for a unique couples portrait.

The background is a solid light pink color. It features two identical wine bottles with green bodies and purple labels, one positioned in the upper right and one in the lower center. There are four champagne flutes filled with a bubbly pink liquid, two on the left and two on the right. Scattered throughout are several strawberries, some orange with white dots and green leaves, and some purple with white dots and green leaves. Small white starburst shapes are also present.

What's

for Dinner?

Challenge each other to create a dinner from only what you have on hand. “Shop” in your pantry and refrigerator, and come up with a winning—or at least interesting—combination for your evening meal. It could be as simple as cereal and milk or as complex as pasta sauce with different canned vegetables and condiments. Think of all the ways you can mix and match. Play an extra-points version in which one person decides on an ingredient beforehand that must be used in the dinner—the weirder the better.

The background is a vibrant orange-red color with scattered five-pointed stars in a darker shade. Various objects are scattered across the page: a purple blindfold with a green strap at the top left; a blue pencil with white floral patterns at the top right; a single die at the top right; a purple pencil with a white grid pattern on the left; a purple blindfold with a green polka-dot strap at the bottom right; three dice in the bottom left; and a green pencil at the bottom center.

Couples

Motto

Create your own “couples motto” that captures the spirit of being together. If copywriting isn’t exactly your thing, adopt a motto or ad slogan that already exists and adapt it to suit yourselves. It can be funny, cheesy, or totally sincere. Maybe you’ll even want to get it printed on a T-shirt or mug.



Get

Physical

Take an online exercise class together. The choices are staggering: from yoga to choreographed aerobics to tai chi to weightlifting with cans, there is something for everybody. Flip a coin for who gets to choose, then switch next time!



Blackout

Pretend there's been a power outage. Light your place with candles and use flashlights. Tonight there will be no television, texting, or screens . . . so what can you do by candlelight? Take a bath (OK, let's say the hot water heater is working). Read a book (if you have enough candles). What can you eat that you don't have to cook? Might be a good night to . . . ahem . . . go to bed early!



Collage

Party

Collect old magazines, newspapers, and junk mail, and get some construction paper, scissors, and glue sticks. Have a collage party, cutting and pasting images onto the construction paper backing. Re-create the kind of collages you made in school, create a mash-up of images that remind you of each other, or make vision boards about the future you're looking forward to together.

The image features a light pink background with a central white banner containing the text "Wine Not?". Surrounding the banner are stylized illustrations of wine bottles, glasses, and strawberries. The bottles are dark green with purple labels and textured necks. The glasses are white with orange liquid and some have a grid pattern. The strawberries are orange with green leaves and some have white polka dots. There are also small orange starburst shapes scattered around.

Wine Not?

Create your own wine tasting party. Choose a family of wines, like Chardonnays or Pinot Noirs, and try 3 to 5 versions of the same varietal. Taste some affordable bottles alongside nicer ones. Tip: Buy half-bottles of wine, or invest in an inexpensive vacuum sealer to keep the open bottles fresh. If you find one is not at all to your liking, you can always use it for cooking!



Scrapbook It

Scrapbooking doesn't need to be precious or require lots of accoutrements. Grab any old notebook or journal, and start gluing or stapling in items that remind you of your time together. Is there a napkin you saved or a ticket stub in a coat pocket? While you're at it, why not print out some of those photos you've taken and put them in as well (you might even find some photos you want to frame!).



Scaredy-
Cats

Start off the evening by watching the scariest movie you can handle. Then turn out the lights and tell each other the creepiest folktales and stories you know (maybe some you remember from camp!). You could even haul out the old Ouija board and see if you can contact the spirits. If you feel brave afterward, head straight to bed. Or, turn on all the lights and play some happy music to break the spell.



Make Some

Noise

Make some beautiful music together. If either of you owns instruments, team up for a duet. If you don't own instruments, be creative. Use pot lids and pastry brushes as drums, your own whistling lips for the melody, and some bottles for a little woodwind action. Best to try this one earlier in the evening, before the neighbors are asleep!

The background is a light pink color. It features two wine bottles with green bodies and purple necks and labels. The labels have white scribbled patterns. There are four glasses filled with a reddish-orange liquid, two on each side of the bottles. Several strawberries, some orange with white dots and some purple with white dots, are scattered around. Small orange starburst shapes are also present.

a Little

Cheesy

Have a '70s-style fondue party! The cheesy, melty goodness pairs so well with all kinds of foods. Besides the classic bread chunks or apple slices, try tomatoes, cooked potatoes, broccoli or other vegetables, or even pickles or bacon. Go full retro and use a fondue set with skewers and a heated pot, or just put the cheese in a heatproof bowl and reheat as needed, using forks to dip. It's cheese—it's gonna taste great no matter what you eat it from. Fun tradition: Whoever drops anything into the fondue pot has to kiss the other person.



Plant

the Seeds

Try to grow something together as your relationship grows. Of course, if you have a yard, you can plant a garden, but don't worry if you have no outdoor space. You can grow green onions from the hairy roots of chopped scallions in a tiny glass with water. Try the old "avocado-pit-on-toothpicks-in-a-cup" trick. Or get some seeds and see what you can coax from small windowsill pots. Tending to it together is very, well, tender.

An illustration on a light pink background featuring two bottles of wine or champagne, one at the top and one at the bottom. The bottles are dark green with purple labels and necks. There are four glasses: two tall, flute-like glasses filled with a bubbly pink liquid, and two shorter glasses filled with a solid pink liquid. Several strawberries, some orange with white dots and some purple, are scattered around the bottles and glasses. Small orange starburst shapes are also present.

Cocktails

for Two


Create your own cool cocktail vibe by getting dressed up as though you were headed out for a night on the town. Craft a signature cocktail by experimenting with different alcohols and mixers. When you find the right combination, give it a name that means something to only the two of you. The best part? No driving home afterward!



Pillow

Talk

Spend the whole evening in bed. (No, not like that!) Turn all your screens off and just have some old-fashioned pillow talk. This is the time to bare private thoughts, tell awkward truths, or share secret dreams. Make the bed a sacred, special place where the whole world is reduced to just the two of you.



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52 Cheap Dates *at* Home

Try these 52 diverting date-night ideas, which not only are inexpensive and imaginative but also can be enjoyed in the comfort of your own home! Have fun with activities like:

- ◉ Home Health Spa
- ◉ Bench Brunch
- ◉ Groovy Body Painting



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