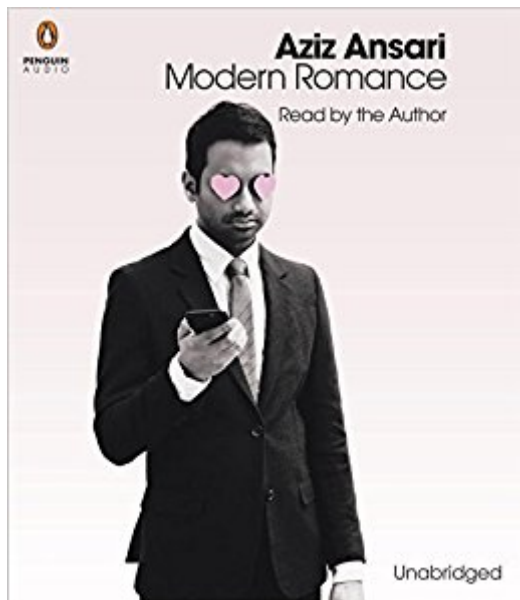


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# Modern Romance



## Synopsis

A hilarious, thoughtful, and in-depth exploration of the pleasures and perils of modern romance from one of this generation's most popular and sharpest comedic voices. At some point, every one of us embarks on a journey to find love. We meet people, date, get into and out of relationships, all with the hope of finding someone with whom we share a deep connection. This seems standard now, but it's wildly different from what people did even just decades ago. Single people today have more romantic options than at any point in human history. With technology, our abilities to connect with and sort through these options are staggering. So why are so many people frustrated? Some of our problems are unique to our time. "Why did this guy just text me an emoji of a pizza?" "Should I go out with this girl even though she listed Combos as one of her favorite snack foods? Combos?!!" "My girlfriend just got a message from some dude named Nathan. Who's Nathan? Did he just send her a photo of his penis? Should I check just to be sure?" But the transformation of our romantic lives can't be explained by technology alone. In a short period of time, the whole culture of finding love has changed dramatically. A few decades ago, people would find a decent person who lived in their neighborhood. Their families would meet and, after deciding neither party seemed like a murderer, they would get married and soon have a kid, all by the time they were twenty-four. Today, people marry later than ever and spend years of their lives on a quest to find the perfect person, a soul mate. For years, Aziz Ansari has been aiming his comic insight at modern romance, but for *Modern Romance*, the book, he decided he needed to take things to another level. He teamed up with NYU sociologist Eric Klinenberg and designed a massive research project, including hundreds of interviews and focus groups conducted everywhere from Tokyo to Buenos Aires to Wichita. They analyzed behavioral data and surveys and created their own online research forum on Reddit, which drew thousands of messages. They enlisted the world's leading social scientists, including Eli Finkel, Helen Fisher, Sheena Iyengar, Barry Schwartz, Sherry Turkle, and Robb Willer. The result is unlike any social science or humor book we've seen before. In *Modern Romance*, Ansari combines his irreverent humor with cutting-edge social science to give us an unforgettable tour of our new romantic world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of June 2015: Aziz Ansari's first book *Modern Love* is thoughtful, deep, and outright hilarious: it's definitely not your run-of-the-mill actor/comedian book offering, and it works. He takes a hot topic that has been a part of his recent stand-up—navigating this minefield called dating—and brings it to a whole new level. The book includes extensive research, data, and insight from leading experts in the field (he co-wrote it with a social scientist)—all sprinkled with Ansari's signature, and spot-on, voice of a generation. Would I have read *Modern Love* by [insert name of expert here]? No way. If I am going to take a long hard look at this subject, I want Ansari along for the ride. Aziz lets you know the struggle is real, and we're all going through it, so be nice. --Deborah Bass --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

New York Times: "A sprightly, easygoing hybrid of fact, observation, advice and comedy." USA

Today: "With topics like online dating apps to serious social science research, the book is sure to have you laughing if not taking a few notes." The Guardian:

"Entertaining and illuminating." Rolling Stone: "A hilarious, often unsettling account of what young singles go through as they search for love in the digital

age." Boston Globe: "A funny and scholarly examination of the 24-hour romance cycle." Paste Magazine:

"The book is an obsessive exploration of what makes hearts flutter and break across the globe, but most importantly, it dissects those ideas through the lens of a right-and-left swiping society. And as a result, Ansari's final product doesn't only feel complete—it's hilariously executed, even without his

unmistakable high-register voice belting the punchlines. At 250 pages, *Modern Romance* is a lean, pithy read that's perfect to reach the tech-obsessed generation it explores.

**Refinery 29:** "An engaging look at the often head-scratching, frequently infuriating mating behaviors that shape our love lives."

**VOX:** "With his first foray into the literary sphere, Ansari handily accomplishes what he set out to do. *Modern Romance* provides insight into what people do to find love. He infuses their stories with his sass and parallels their shame with much of his own. On top of that, Ansari's advice is easy to follow and backed with science and research. *Modern Romance* is the pinnacle of romantic guides • at least until a new dating app makes it obsolete."

**The A.V. Club:** "It's hard to think of another celebrity book that also feels like breaking news. Aside from the jokes, the science of *Modern Romance* holds water, and is absolutely fascinating."

**Contexts:** "This book is awesome."

**The Source:** "This book is essentially an Aziz Ansari standup routine in print form. His unique voice is present throughout the book. One reason that people love Aziz is his outlook on life. He has a funny way of refocusing seemingly ordinary things and zeroing in on very small details that most would not notice. He brings all of that and more to the table with this book. This book is informative, presents a lot of thought provoking topics and discusses them thoroughly. Paired with Aziz's distinct voice, this book is even more endearing."

**The Daily Beast:** "Funny, informative, and surprisingly earnest."

**The Atlantic:** "Modern Romance reads like a *CliffsNotes* to relationshiping as it is currently experienced by (mostly middle-class, Ansari admits, and mostly straight) Americans. It's the familiar stuff of research and sitcom, distilled into a funny, and highly readable, summary."

**Bustle:** "You're not going to find a traditional humor book. And that's a good thing. *Modern Romance* is something a bit more unique: a comprehensive, in-depth sociological investigation into the many challenges of looking for love in the digital age. *Modern Romance* gives an impressive overview of how the dating game has changed with the advent of cell phones and the Internet. But there's also some practical advice peppered in there by Ansari himself."

**O, The Oprah Magazine:** "Even comedy phenoms get dumped. But when it was this Parks and Recreation star's turn, he channeled the rejection into an extensive (and riotous) investigation of the current state of dating, going as far as recruiting an NYU sociologist to be his collaborator/wingman."

**Bookforum:** "A social-science book that's pleasant to read and a comedy book that actually has something to say."

**Kirkus Reviews:**

“The ever hip and funny comedian and Parks and Recreation star embarks on a surprisingly insightful exploration of the complex realities of dating today.” Ansari’s eminently readable book is successful, in part, because it not only lays out the history, evolution, and pitfalls of dating, it also offers sound advice on how to actually win today’s constantly shifting game of love. Often hilarious, consistently informative, and unusually helpful.

—Natasha Gilmore, Publishers Weekly

“Ansari, a comedian and TV actor, has co-written a book with a legitimate sociologist about what it means to date in the modern era. When technology and instant gratification are changing the landscape of human interactions, dating is weirder than ever, and I’m looking forward to Ansari’s sense of humor and cultural criticism on the topic, which he’s started to address in his stand-up.”

—Steven Levitt, coauthor of the #1 New York Times bestselling Freakonomics

“Always-hilarious Aziz Ansari proves you can be smart and funny at the same time. Not only did I laugh my ass off, I really learned stuff. Where was this book when I was 22 years old?”

—Jonathan Safran Foer, author of Eating Animals

“Laughing is my second least-favorite thing in the world after thinking. This book was torture. Not a page passed without an unwanted eruption of giggles or insight. Aziz is funny as hell, and smart as shit.”

—Sherry Turkle, Abby Rockefeller Mauz Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; author of Reclaiming Conversation

“It’s the voices that will have you reading this remarkable book in one sitting! The voices of old people who married someone who lived in their apartment building or the building next door and the voices of the young people who check out hundreds of romantic possibilities a night, with so much choice that choice becomes impossible. And then there is the voice of Ansari himself, funny, of course, but also deeply compassionate. This book defines serious fun.”

—Dave Eggers, author of Your Fathers, Where Are They? And the Prophets, Do They Live Forever?

“Modern Romance is just like Aziz Ansari himself—charming, thoughtful, reasonable, and able to distill the madness of the world into something both sane and wildly funny.”

—Helen Fisher, Senior Research Fellow, The Kinsey Institute; author of Why Him? Why Her?

“Ansari and Klinenberg elegantly capture the entirely new ways that singles communicate, court, and find love today. Modern Romance is a captivating read, with deep insight into history, science, and culture, and loads of wit and charm. Along the way, you may even collect some valuable tips for finding a soul mate.”

—This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

As a Belgian I am totally unfamiliar with Aziz Ansari as a celebrity/stand-up comedian. I ordered this

book after I mentioned being SUPER frustrated by texting with flaky or pervy guys to a friend. She send me an article about the "Straight White Boys Texting" blog that also mentioned Aziz's upcoming book. Drawn by the strong sociological research focus I decided to give it a go. First off, I was SUPER relieved to find out my frustrations and anxieties seemed to be universal. VERY universal. I had no idea. It feels comforting to know we're all in this together, as Aziz tells us many times. Secondly, the research presented in this book is impressive, while still so clearly written and spiced with humor and clever remarks that I highlighted (I guess I would like the guys' shows) In fact, the book is besides informative also super entertaining. A challenging combination but Aziz nailed it brilliantly. And thirdly, thanks for the advice :) I am sure guilty of a few dating faux pas myself and will take his advice to heart. Especially the part where he tells us about first changing his lifestyle to fit that of his dream girl, in order to finally meet his dream girl (which - surprise! - was NOT at 3am in a dark drunk night club). His advice based on the research or on his own experience can sometimes be shockingly obvious/evident, yet it seems that both Aziz and me really needed to see it in graphs or focus groups to become conscious of it and improve our strategies! Basically, I would highly recommend this book to any 25-40 year old being confused about love, (online) dating, choice, texting/sexting, settling and commitment. I guess that's a pretty big market right there :)

When I read that Aziz had a book coming out, I decided I needed to treat myself. To start, I think anybody contemplating buying the Kindle version should really just spend the extra bucks for the hardcopy, as the book is filled with cool colored pictures and graphs that I think really add to the overall experience. It just wouldn't be as fun reading on a black and white Kindle. That being said, when I first started the book I was expecting another biography similar to that of Mindy Kaling or Amy Poehler's. Just another comedian writing a book about their lives in a humorous way while occasionally doing some name dropping of other famous people. I'm glad that ended up not being the case at all. This book was actually written based on numerous research and study group experiments. Aziz teamed up with a renowned sociologist who is an expert in this field to learn as much as he can about modern dating. All of that made up for a very informing read backed by lots of data and interviews with real people. Of course, all this data is presented in an Aziz way - full of humor in the best way possible. Not once did I feel bored about all the numbers that were on the pages, and I found myself laughing out loud a lot every so often from the ridiculous stories Aziz came up with. Most of the book is focused around online dating and how the current generation is navigating themselves through this new world. Why is it so hard to feel satisfied when there are so many options at our fingertips? How

did people even find anybody before with their limited options? What happens after we finally settle on one person? Will we be more satisfied with our choices 20 years in the future? This book tries to answer a lot of those questions by looking at older generations before us and how it eventually evolved to where we are now. Aziz even went to places like Japan, Paris and India to compare the dating cultures there. All of this combined created a very interesting perspective at how different dating can be. There were a couple times in the book where I felt like things started to drag on from too much repetition. But never did I feel like the book was a drag to read, and I quickly finished this book within a couple hours of reading time. All said and done, definitely take the moment to just treat yourself and read this book. If you don't know much about modern dating, you'll learn about it, and if you think you already know a lot about modern dating, you'll learn how to be better at it and then some.

On my birthday -- which is the same as the publication date of this book -- my sister called to tell me that she'd bought me Aziz Ansari's new book. "Great!", I thought. Aziz is one funny dude, so it should not be much of a chore to humor my sister's generosity by reading it. It wasn't until the next day, when I read Aziz & Eric's New York Times article on online dating, that I realized that this book was going to hit the sweet spot of my brain like a Tomahawk missile, for reasons that are about to become abundantly obvious. I finished "Modern Romance" the same night I received it, thereby ignoring actual romance with an actual woman. What you have to realize is that "Modern Romance," although plenty funny at approximately one guffaw per 7 minutes, is not merely a book of humor. It's co-written with an actual university sociology professor (Eric Klinenberg of NYU, who for some reason doesn't get credited on the cover, hmm), and contains much legwork and original research. These guys have created focus groups, polled theater audiences, spoken to experts in the field, and most important, delved into thousands of real text message chats from real people. It contains data, my friends -- the kind of data that you and I do not have access to, unless you happen to regularly snoop on your buddies' phones. And the data is often revelatory. For example, did you know that a third of marriages today originated online? That 52% of people over 30 call for a first date, vs. 23% for those under 30? That a woman finds a man who's attracted to her more attractive than a guy who already digs her? Much crazy stuff like that in there. Why did I find this book so compelling? Well, if the

definition of brilliant is “someone who thinks just like me”, then Aziz and Eric must be geniuses. But besides corroborating a lot of the thoughts I’ve had about dating and romance over the past 10 years, here’s what else I really like about this book:-- They put the highlights of the teachings of top experts on dating, love, relationships and happiness all in one spot. So, unlike me, now you don’t have to go read all of the books by Helen Fisher, Esther Perel, Barry Schwartz, Sheena Iyengar, Sherry Turkle, Dan Savage, Stephanie Coontz, Jonathan Haidt, and Christian Rudder, you lucky duck.-- They do a very balanced, lucid treatment of online dating opportunities and pitfalls. Hey look, you now have so much choice! Choice is good! And that overabundance of choice via Match and Tinder and OKCupid and FarmersOnly can also be debilitating and lead to long-term misery and loneliness, for reasons they explain very well.-- They make a lot of sensible recommendations. For example, on a first date, it’s not necessary to feel a thousand butterflies exploding in your stomach as a signal that you two are a good match. Go on more second and third dates. Give stuff a chance to develop and stuff. One of my favorite parts of the book are the stories of what modern dating is like in other parts of the world. Just in case you think you’ve got it bad:--In Qatar, there is no dating. A woman’s only escape ticket from her parent’s home is marriage. But that just means getting stuck with a husband (i.e. a total stranger, because remember, there’s no dating) who’s even more controlling and possessive than her parents. Modern solution: using smartphones to arrange clandestine hotel parties, where young people can actually meet and flirt with one another.-- Japan is seriously whacked out. As of 2013, 45% of young women and 25% of men “were not interested or despised sexual contact.” The government is so worried about population decline that it actually sponsors massive, roving group dates called “machikon”, just so singles can meet one another.-- I was not aware that Buenos Aires was just one big sex-drenched flirtathon, with hyperaggressive males ceaselessly catcalling women and “telos” (hourly love hotels) on every corner that oversubscribe at peak hours (3-4am).-- In France, apparently it’s perfectly normal for a woman to receive a text asking “Fancy a shag?” from a guy she’s met at a bar, and perfectly normal for her to answer “oui” or “non” depending on her mood. Also, they just kinda assume infidelity happens and get less worked up about it than all other nationalities. Although this is primarily a descriptive book, not a prescriptive one, Aziz and Eric do give some concrete pointers for navigating the landscape of love in the digital world. For



example, I like their empirically-derived guidelines for effective texting: issue a firm and specific invitation; make reference to your prior conversation; inject humor. And this is what I found to be their most salient bit of advice: “Treat potential partners like actual people, not bubbles on a screen. In other words, treat people like people, people! This encapsulates the sane, generous and wise spirit of a book about an aspect of life that has a lot of potential to turn irrational, mean and short-sighted -- especially with all the gadgets at our disposal. As such, all of you single folks would do well set aside your smartphone for a sec to get some tips, much wisdom and many guffaws from “Modern Romance.” -- Ali Binazir, M.D., M.Phil., author of The Tao of Dating: The Smart Woman’s Guide to Being Absolutely Irresistible, the #1-rated dating book on for 4+ years

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