



\$10

GREAT D♥TES

*Connecting Love, Marriage,
and Fun on a Budget*

PETER & HEATHER
LARSON

AND

DAVID & CLAUDIA
ARP



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To couples everywhere
who want to add fun to their marriage
through Great Dates

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Introduction

A recent conversation:

Question: “What’s your favorite date?”

Answer: “You mean before we were married?”

Question: “No, what’s your favorite date from the past couple of months?”

Answer: [Silence, then . . .] “We don’t actually date. We’re so busy, and it’s super expensive! It’s just not easy to do.”

If you can identify with this conversation, or if you’re simply looking for ways to energize your relationship, we’ve got you covered. In the following pages we offer 52 Great Dates that are easy to pull off, easy to do (lots of tips and helps), and best of all, doable on a budget of \$10 or less!

Think back to your initial dating days and why you dated each other in the first place. When we ask dating couples (the unmarried type) why they date, we hear comments like “*Because I’m crazy about her.*” “*He makes me happy.*” “*I want our relationship to grow.*” “*I want to know her on a deeper level.*” “*We’re really attracted to each other.*” Wouldn’t it be great if married couples could tap into this same positive energy in an ongoing way? Dating on a regular basis is a fun way for couples to rejuvenate their love for each other.

We (the Arps) often say, “Fun in marriage is serious business!” Think about it: have you ever met a couple on the way to the divorce

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court who were having fun together? Don't think so! And how do you put more fun in your relationship? One way is by having regular date nights. Dates with a purpose. (Not just dinner and a movie.) Research reveals that dating can make a positive difference in a relationship. But here's the catch: predictable dinner-and-a-movie dates have less impact than dates that stretch you and take you out of your normal routine. New experiences help you bond together and often result in a big payoff for your marriage. But one of you needs to take the initiative!

Taking time and effort to initiate a date sends several powerful messages to your spouse. It communicates that you want to be together and that your spouse is worth the time, money, and effort involved. Most couples complain about overscheduled lives, so taking time for a date shows that you want to give your significant other your attention. With so many things competing for our time, dates rarely just happen naturally. A date communicates, "I choose you as a priority, and I want to be intentional about nurturing our relationship."

We (the Larsons) can tell when it has been too long since we've been on a date. We begin to feel disconnected, and we function more like roommates than spouses. We become short with each other in the midst of our schedules, kids, and responsibilities. This general sense of distance and tension is a signal that we need time alone as a couple, time to reconnect. Maybe you can identify with us.

So, what makes a date great? No rules exist for what constitutes a successful date, but there are several common elements: quality time together, giving each of you a break from your normal routine, a shared activity, and conversation. Men tend to relax through doing an activity; women often relax by talking. So if your date includes both an activity and the opportunity to talk, you're on your way to a great date.

In the following pages, we offer you a variety of fun dates that include the above elements and will take you out of your norm. Unlike books you read from cover to cover, you can read this book spontaneously. Our dates are divided into eight sections, each offering a

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different type of date. Simply read the section that fits your mood, then choose your next Great Date from that section. (All dates should fit your \$10 budget!) You'll find everything from Romantic Dates to The Great Outdoors Dates to Out-on-the-Town Dates.

With each date, you will find your own personal dating guide with *Before Your Date* suggestions as well as tips for your actual date in the *On Your Date* section. We've included *Talking Points* that can be conversation starters and enhancers. And for each date we offer a *Great Date Takeaway*—a thought to ponder and apply to your relationship. While most of the dates are fun and easy to pull off, some dates will take you deeper. Others require more energy and effort. Not all dates will appeal to you, so we give you permission to pick and choose what sounds fun to both of you.

We hope our dates will result in an experience of enjoyment and improved connection. Hopefully, they will lead to many meaningful conversations and enhance your communication, flexibility, and general sense of relational well-being. Now it's time to make your marriage come alive with fun, laughter, and good times together! Enjoy your Great Dates!

At some point in your dating adventures, we'd love to hear about your favorite fun and economical Great Date. You can reach us at www.facebook.com/10GreatDates or www.10greatdates.org, where you'll also find more tips to energize your marriage, as well as information about other dating resources.

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Adventure
GREAT DATES

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Out-of-Towners Great Date

Recently Claudia and I (Dave) had houseguests, and, of course, living in the Washington, D.C., area, at the top of the agenda was seeing the sights. While we have lived here for a number of years, we always get a different perspective when we look at our hometown through the eyes of a tourist.

The Idea

On this date, you can be the “out-of-towners” and look at your own town through a tourist filter. Pretend this is your first visit. You may be amazed what you discover about your own stomping grounds and how fortunate you are to live so close to so many interesting sights.

Before Your Date

- Research your local area and discover fun things to do and free venues of interest.
- Search the web to find discount days, coupons, and other deals for the places you plan to visit.

Adventure Great Dates

- Contact the chamber of commerce for free brochures and maps of the area.
- If you live in a small town, you might want to include a broader area for your “tourist” date.
- If you need child care, check out the Cheap Child Care Options near the back of this book.

On Your Date

- Allow plenty of time for your date. Remember that you are “tourists” seeing the sights for the first time.
- Consider taking your own walking tour of the downtown area. You get a different perspective when you’re walking vs. driving.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.
- You might want to wear a backpack and bring along water and snacks to help stay on budget.
- Be sure to have a camera or smartphone to document your date. A small flexible tripod will facilitate taking fun couple pictures, or if it’s an option, reverse the camera on your smartphone, stretch out your arm, and snap a selfie of both of you.

Talking Points

- How does putting on “tourist glasses” change your perspective?
- How willing are you to venture out and try new things?
- What did you learn about your hometown that you didn’t know before this date?
- If you were giving a guided tour, what points of interest would you include?
- What other sights would you like to visit on another date?

Great Date Takeaway

When we take the time to explore together, we gain a new appreciation of where we live, work, and play. How does this relate to your relationship? Even the ordinary and familiar can seem different when looked at through the eyes of an out-of-towner. What are the great things about your relationship that others might notice but perhaps you overlook? It's time to celebrate some of the positive attractions in your own "hometown" marriage.

Gifts on a Budget Great Date

Heather is a natural spender and loves to give gifts to others. We like to say she's good for the economy—the money comes in and the money goes out. I'm a natural-born saver (Peter), so the budget part of this date speaks my language. At times, our different financial personalities have led to tension, and I know we are not alone in this. The key is finding a balance between savings, spending, and giving. On this date, you'll have the opportunity to find that balance as you give the gift of something special for your spouse *on a \$5 budget*.

The Idea

Together head to the local mall or department store with the task of buying each other a gift. The challenge is to spend just \$5 on each gift. Yes, this includes tax! You get to practice staying within a budget. You also get to surprise each other with a thoughtful gift.

Before Your Date

- Find child care if you need it.
- Choose a store with a wide range of inexpensive merchandise or a mall with several stores.
- Make sure you each have just \$5 cash to spend on each gift. (Remember, you're practicing staying on budget.)

On Your Date

- First, set a time and location you'll meet together once you're done. Then split up and shop separately for about fifteen to twenty minutes. You may need longer to find a meaningful bargain!
- Try to find something special or significant for your partner. It doesn't need to be big or expensive to be meaningful. For example, Heather loves the candy Hot Tamales. Every time I buy her some, she feels loved because it shows I was thinking of her.
- Hit the sale racks and check out counters where stores often have discounted impulse buys.
- For the big exchange, consider heading to a location where you'll have time and space to talk privately.

Talking Points

- Was it more fun to give or receive the gift?
- What did you wish you could buy, but had to pass up due to the price?
- Were you able to stay under budget? If not, explain what happened.
- Why do you think budgets are so challenging to establish and keep?

Great Date Takeaway

This date provides several opportunities. First, you can have fun giving and receiving a gift. Second, you have the opportunity to resist going over budget. Every store is filled with items that cost more than your \$5 budget, and you'll need to resist the temptation to go overboard. Spending some money can be fun and lead to great experiences and memories, but overspending can create stress that leads to challenges. Think about some strategies to keep your household budget on track. If you don't have a budget, consider creating one today.