

Your guide to what's **hot** on the high street

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Siobhan McNally

DIARY OF A SINGLE MUM

The dog-eat-dog world of dating

I took my pug Boris for a swift half in the pub the other evening and - woof - suddenly I found myself in several conversations with blokes at the bar. It's like they saw Boris and said, "Hello mate - who's your cute human friend?" In fact, since moving back into town, I've never chatted to so many random men. Perhaps being a dog-owner gives you a stamp of approval in a chap's head. "She picks up poo," he thinks, "so she'll probably tolerate my involuntary nasal whistling." My newly-single sister-in-law Joce doesn't get to meet many blokes generally as she's a teetotal teacher. She found her last boyfriend at a tennis club on a Friday night, but it turned out his balls were all on the court.

I told her not to bother with online dating. "You should go to pubs to meet men. Take Boris - he's bloke bait," I said. "You'll have them dropping to their knees and stroking your pet wherever you go."



Siobhan and 'bloke bait' Boris

"But I don't like going into pubs on my own," she replied. "You're not on your own - you're with Boris, aka man's best friend," I explained. "He's your key to unlocking the secretive man

world of solo pub drinking. "But don't let the barman give him too many treats though," I added, "or you'll unlock more than you bargained for - Boris has been known to clear a bar with his biscuity backdraft."

So if you're a single and ready to mingle, these are my top five tips for taking the pooch for a drink date:

1. Trendy bars are where you go to shriek with your mates, so choose a real ale pub popular with early evening dog walkers and drinkers, especially ones with a cock or a ferret in the name.
2. Even if you hate beer, don't order a Dirty Martini - it's not a flipping cocktail lounge. Hide the fact that you're high maintenance and don't use baby speak with Prada, your pet Chihuahua.
3. Surveys show that the best canine man-lure is a golden retriever, but just having a friendly dog is the most important thing. Men fall for that "unconditional love" thing every time *eye roll*.
4. Beware log stacks and Christmas trees in pubs. The smell of the wild can confuse some doggies and make them forget they're indoors.
5. Never outstay your welcome - the art of bar chat-ups is to keep your visit brief but regular. Always look like you're off to do something interesting, even if it's just going home to, literally, make a dog's dinner.

Perhaps being the owner of a pooch gives you a stamp of approval

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Mac, £129, stripe dress, £45, navy tote, £45, all M&S

BEIGE MAC

You'll never regret splashing out on a classic mac and they don't get any better than this elegant design from high street fave M&S



Wrap skirt, £55, bangle, £14, Topshop. Stripe top, £12.99, New Look. Jacket, £55, M&S

STRIPES

Not your boring blue and white vertical stripes, though. It's got to be something more interesting so try mixing colours and angles



White shirt, £28, M&S. Burgundy top, £30, Topshop. Pink tote, £23, Bhs

WHITE SHIRT

If you don't have a white shirt in your wardrobe then it's time to invest. It's made a welcome return and we'll be wearing it with everything

smart

You don't have to spend a fortune to look on trend in 2016. A few intelligent buys are all you need to instantly update your look.

By style editor Dinah van Tulleken



Navy wrap blouse, £29.99, Zara. Suedette skirt, £12, Primark. Beige across body bag, £28, Simply Be.

SUEDE

It looks like suede is here to stay so make sure you've got some in your wardrobe. This pleat detail suedette skirt from Primark is a bargain



High-neck dress, £109, Kaleidoscope. Earrings, £14, Freedom at Topshop. Black court shoes, £45, River Island.

LACE

Lace has gone the distance and proved itself a timeless trend. So snap up an elegant dress that can be wheeled out for special occasions



Denim dress, £45, M&S. Box bag, £12.99, New Look

DENIM

Denim is no longer reserved for jeans. Tops, skirts and dresses in this much-loved fabric are the things to be stocking up with this season