

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact The term “hooking up” began commonly appearing in the early to mid-1980s.

Q How has hooking up changed the college dating scene?

A. Great question! Courtship and dating customs typically change with the times and the advent of what the media likes to call ‘hookup culture’ is now closely associated with the college lifestyle. But don’t be fooled – while the term might be a relatively new one, hooking up is not. What is hooking up anyway? Is hooking up kissing? Does it include hands under shirt, oral sex, or penetrative sex? Or is it a combination of all of the above? While there is no single definition of what hooking up is, it’s generally described as sexual encounters that fall outside the bounds of a formal romantic relationship. Social media, texting, and apps that allow instant messaging have made it easier for students to interact with each other virtually. That makes meeting someone today more casual and spontaneous than ever before – with a smartphone, it’s easy to get a host of dating apps and find someone to meet within hours.

A lot of articles offer opinions on how ‘pervasive hook-up culture’ has ruined the dating scene for college students, but has it? Here at the UA, the percentage of students who

reported having any type of sex has remained relatively steady over the last decade. According to the latest Health and Wellness Survey, 67% of students reported that they had vaginal or anal intercourse within the school year, compared to 63% in 2003. The percentage of students who have had penetrative sex with only 1 or 2 partners in the past school year has also remained largely unchanged over time. In fact, many people graduate from the UA having no or minimal sexual experience altogether. It may be that the perception of how much casual sex students are having isn’t the same as the reality.

Technology has changed the way people meet but we haven’t been able to conclusively say more people are having sex. Whether you’re looking to be as free and unattached for as long as possible or searching for a lasting relationship while in college, there’s hope! At the end of the day, ‘hooking up’ or ‘dating’ is a personal choice and you should feel free to choose your own way. Whatever you choose, be sure to communicate your expectations about the relationship with your partner(s) so that you are going into it with your eyes wide open.

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