

Online Safety 4 Schools

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Sexting

Inappropriate Images

In the UK, the age of sexual consent is 16, whereas the age you can legally send a naked image is 18.

SCHOOLS

1. What Exactly is Sexting

The Term Sexting is used generally to encompass a wide variety of digital activities: sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images. Although mobile phones are the most common vehicle for sexting, the term can also apply to sending sexually explicit messages through any digital media such as email, instant messaging, and/or social media sites.

2. Why do Children get Involved in Sexting?

Children do get involved in Sexting and this is becoming the norm with teenagers, what must be remembered is that most of all images and videos are sent willingly and most likely upon request. Whilst this is a criminal offence, the reasons for taking and sharing can be very innocent and all part of growing up, understanding their own sexuality, and establishing a relationship.

Teen "romance"	– image / video shared willingly
Intimacy with partner	– image / video shared willingly
Flirting / Prank / Joke	– image / video shared willingly
Showing off (parties)	– image / video shared willingly
Impulsive risk-taking	– image / video shared willingly
Peer pressure	– image / video shared willingly

However, whilst most images / videos are taken and shared willingly there can be unintentional consequences. Embarrassment, humiliation, and emotional hurt as a result of a breakdown in a relationship or the loss of control of the sharing of an image or video. Furthermore, there may be coercion or blackmailing as a result of online engagement with online strangers.

So , unintentional consequences -

Revenge	– image / video shared to cause Shame
Bullying or intimidation	– image / video shared (Online Psychological Exploitation)
Tricked or Coerced	– image / video shared (Sexually Exploited)
Blackmail	– image / video shared for (Physical Financial Sexual Exploitation)
Viral Phenomenon	- image / video shared exponentially (Online Reputation Damage)

3. What devices & platforms do Children use in Sexting?

Any device that has internet connectivity and allows for email, messaging services and/or App and gaming usage is capable of being used to send and share imagery. Mobile phones are the most popular device used for sexting followed by PC and tablets.

Any platforms that allows for photos, videos and live streaming are capable of being used to take, share and broadcast sexually explicit imagery. The most popular Apps and social media are Snapchat, Whats App, Instagram, Kik, Tik Tok and We Chat, with text messaging and email also being used.

4. Facts about Sexting

Why is it a Problem: 1. A photo shared between two people can quickly become a viral phenomenon. Children & Young Adults may believe it will be kept private and then discover it has been shared widely with their peers, sometimes with grave consequences. These include arrests of teenagers who shared photos of themselves or other underage teenagers. Sexting could result in charges of distributing or possessing child pornography.

Why is it a Problem: 2. The increase in young people sexting cannot have escaped the attention of most parents. Data from police forces published in November 2017 showed a surge in children sharing or possessing sexual images of themselves or others - sometimes referred to as "Self-Generated Images" – with over 6200 incidents reported 2016-17 being an increase of 131% from 2014/2015.

73% of parents believe that sexting is always harmful.

39% of parents are concerned that their child may become involved in sexting in the future.

13% of boys and girls had taken a topless picture of themselves

55% had shared them with others

3% had taken fully naked pictures

31% had also shared the image with someone that they did not know

5. COVID -19

The recent lockdown has meant that we all possibly found ourselves being alone for an extended period, and certainly children and young adults have had unrestricted, unmonitored, and unsupervised use of devices, photo sharing Apps and social media. Terms like "nudes" and "dick pics" tweeted alongside "coronavirus" jumped up 384 percent on Twitter from the beginning of March to April, furthermore, the peach emoji saw a 46 percent spike, and they predicted the use of the peach and eggplant emojis will continue to rise through April.

During COVID- 19, virtual schooling, lockdown and excessive internet access, parents, carers trusted adults must speak openly with their children, about the dangers of social media, and online predators, parents can better prepare children for the dangers of unsupervised online activity.

6. Most Popular Social Media Sites

Snapchat – Tik Tok - Instagram – Facebook – Live.ly – Yubo – Kik – Houseparty – Omegle – Badoo
Twitter – Whats App – We Chat

[See Besafe Online 2020 Current popular Apps - Current Popular Apps & Apps Explained](#)

7. Parental Advice re Sexting

Whilst Sexting is a known term for the sending or receiving of sexually explicit images or videos, it is a generally a word that is not used or accepted by teenagers, they would prefer to use the word 'Nudes'. One reason for this is the normalising of this behaviour, another is that most children always feel a sense of embarrassment when discussing any issue with the word 'sex' in it. Therefore, it is worth noting that the definition of Sexting does equal the definition of Indecent Images of Children and that a 'Sext' could also be described as an Inappropriate Selfie. Using 'inappropriate selfie' with your children will allow for a less embarrassing and accepted form of discussion.

1. Understand what image sharing apps / platforms are used by your children.
2. Start discussions early about the risks and consequences of sexting.
3. Do stress that it isn't OK to pressure someone into sexting, or to let others pressure you.
4. Remind your child that once an image is sent, they cannot control or retract it.
5. Do stress that it is not acceptable to engage with or send personal images or videos to online strangers.
6. Explain the possible legal consequences.
7. Explain the possible Online Reputation consequences and the issues of Cyber Vetting by universities and companies.
8. Talk with teens about sexting situations they might face, and safe responses.
9. Talk to your children about what a healthy romantic relationship looks like.
10. Under 14's - Ask permission before you send a picture or video.

[See Besafe Online Ten Top Tips for Parents / Carers Online Safety Ten Top Tips](#)

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