



How to Talk to Kids about Sexting

Sexting is the sharing of sexually explicit messages or nude (partial or full) images via cell phone, tablet, mobile device or computer. Sexts may be sent as text messages or via apps or online games.

Sexting happens in all kinds of relationships, from long-term couples to online relationships between teens who've never met in person. Kids need help understanding what sexting is and how sharing photos and videos could become dangerous.

Why do children/teens sext?

- * To build intimacy with a partner
- * To impress a crush
- * To try to be funny
- * Because of pressure from online or offline relationships

How to talk to kids about sexting

First, you need to know what your child's baseline understanding of sexting is. Talk openly about what might happen. Use examples that fit your child's age, and tell them how to get help.

For younger children

Let them know that messages should never contain pictures or videos of anyone (kids or adults) without their clothes on or touching private parts. If they see this, they should show you.

For older children

Use the term "sexting," and be specific that sexting involves pictures or video. Ask your child if they've seen nudity or sexual activities on their phone or from someone else.

Explain to older kids:

- * Sexting is serious and could be considered a crime.
- * Images of anyone under 18 may be considered child sexual abuse material.
- * Texts, images and videos on the internet can stay there forever — even when you post on an app that "deletes" images and videos after a short time.
- * Receivers can forward a sext or screenshot without the sender's consent or knowledge.
- * If you find it difficult to bring up, start by saying you read an article about sexting or a friend mentioned it and it made you curious.

Encourage your child to:

- * Come to you with concerns about sexting — even if they're scared or embarrassed.
- * Resist peer pressure and protect themselves by not taking, sending or sharing sexts.
- * Tell you how they would respond if asked to participate in inappropriate texting.

Teach kids how to get out of sexting:

- * If they know the person, tell them to text, "My parents have an app that monitors my phone, please don't send this stuff."
- * If they don't know the person, show them how to report and block a sender.

Learn more at
[internetmatters.org/
issues/sexting](https://internetmatters.org/issues/sexting)



Our Kids is a Nashville-based clinic that provides expert medical evaluations and crisis counseling in response to concerns of child sexual abuse. For more, visit OurKidsCenter.com