

# Sexting



[nspcc.org.uk](http://nspcc.org.uk)

# What is sexting?

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages.

Sexting may also be called:

- Trading Nudes
- Dirties
- Pic for Pic





# What the law says

Sexting can be seen as harmless, but creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. A young person is breaking the law if they:

- take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend
- share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age
- possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created

The sending of inappropriate images is classed as 'Distributing Child Pornography' and is a serious offence.



# Why do young people sext?

There are many reasons why a young person may want to send a naked or semi-naked picture, video or message to someone else.

- Joining in because they think that ‘everyone is doing it’.
- Boosting their self-esteem.
- Flirting with others and testing their sexual identity.
- Exploring their sexual feelings.
- To get attention and connect with new people on social media.
- They may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent.



## Some Facts.....

- Around 1 in 7 young people have taken a semi-naked/naked picture of themselves. Over half went on to share the picture with someone else.
- 10% of children aged 13-14 say that they have received sexual messages in the past 12 months.
- 5% of 12-15 year old boys say they have been bullied online in the past year.

# What are the risks of sexting?



- No control of images and how they're used.
- It's easy to send a photo or message but the sender has no control about how it's passed on.

When images are stored or shared online they become public. Some people may think that images and videos only last a few seconds on social media and then they're deleted, but they can still be saved or copied by others. This means that photos or videos which a young person may have shared privately could still be end up being shared between adults they don't know

# What are the risks of sexting?



Young people may think 'sexting' is harmless but it can leave them vulnerable.

**Blackmail** - An offender may threaten to share the pictures with the child's family and friends unless the child sends money or more images.

**Bullying** - If images are shared with their peers or in school, the child may be bullied.

**Unwanted attention** - Images posted online can attract the attention of sex offenders, who know how to search for, collect and modify images.

**Emotional distress** - Children and young people can feel embarrassed and humiliated.

# Things to think about before sending

## What could happen to it?

Once you press send, it is no longer in your control. It can be posted anywhere on the internet. It could end up on social networking sites or even porn sites.

## Who might see it?

Don't send anything you wouldn't want your parents, teachers or friends seeing. Even if you completely trust someone, other people using their phone might accidentally see it.

## What are the risks?

Even if you use a webcam or an app like Snapchat, the person can take a screen shot. In seconds.

## Why do you want to send it?

If you want to impress somebody, you can do it in other ways. In most cases, sexting can have the opposite effect and you could be seen as somebody you're not.

## Who are you sending it to?

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# What to do if you're sent sexual messages

- Don't pass it on or share it with anyone. Think how that person might feel if somebody else saw it. Think how you'd feel if it was a picture of you. If you're asking your boyfriend or girlfriend for a naked photo, think how much trust they'll need to give you and how much pressure you'll be putting on them.
- You should [speak to an adult in your life that you trust](#) and tell them what you've received. This is really important if you're under 18 or the other person is much older than you.
- You can also report them using the [CEOP reporting website](#) and block them from contacting you again. This will stop them from sending you more inappropriate pictures.
- People aren't always honest about who they are online. If you've anything like an email, text message, picture message, voicemail or one that makes you uncomfortable, you should [speak to an adult that you trust](#).



# Who else can help?

- **CEOP's [Thinkuknow](#)** give advice for parents, as well as children and young people of different ages, on staying safe online. Thinkuknow have created [short videos](#) to help parents understand why children 'sext', how to talk to them about it and what to do if their child is affected.
- **[Internetmatters.org](#)** work to help parents keep their children safe online. They provide free advice on online issues affecting children, including [sexting](#) and [grooming](#).
- **[The UK Safer Internet Centre](#)** gives advice and resources for parents and professionals on online safety. Their website has links to games and quizzes for [primary](#) and [secondary](#) aged children that encourages them to be safe online.