



SAFE ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS: LESSON 4



Sexting

Related to pornography is the digital age activity known as “sexting” — **the transmission of nude, semi-nude or sexually explicit material across digital channels.**

[GuardChild](#), an organization dedicated to protecting children in the digital age, has compiled data on sexting from studies conducted by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, The Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Cox Communications Teen Online & Wireless Safety Survey. This data shows that **20% of teens overall have sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos or videos of themselves.** Additionally, those who admitted to appearing in or creating these images report feeling very or extremely upset, embarrassed, or afraid as a result, as did 25% of youth receiving the images.

It is important to let young people know about the possible legal consequences of sexting, which can be very serious. Some teenagers who have sent sexual photos of themselves or others have been charged with **distribution of child pornography**, and some individuals who have received such photos have been **charged with possession of child pornography.** Violators may even end up on their state’s sex-offender registry. In some states sexting is even considered a felony and can be punishable by 7 to 10 years in prison.

A large number of young people are **completely unaware of these serious consequences**, so it is important that adults provide education and guidance on sexting the moment a young person starts using a mobile device.



What You Need To Know

[DoSomething.org](https://www.do-something.org), one of the largest organizations promoting positive social change, recently published these facts about sexting:

- ✔ Teenage girls have a few reasons for sexting: **40 percent do it as a joke**, 34 percent do it to feel sexy, and 12 percent feel pressured to do it [1].
- ✔ Who will see your sext? 17% of sexters share the messages they receive with others, and **55% of those share them with more than one person** [1].
- ✔ While nearly 70% of teen boys and girls who sext do so with their girlfriend or boyfriend, 61% of all sexters who have sent nude images **admit that they were pressured to do it at least once** [1].
- ✔ Nearly 40% of all teenagers have posted or sent sexually suggestive messages, but this **practice is more common among boys than girls**[1].
- ✔ **Sending semi-nude or nude photos is more common among teens girls.** 22% of teen girls report sending images of this nature, while only 18% of same-age boys have [1].
- ✔ 15% of teens who have sent or posted nude/semi-nude images of themselves send these messages **to people they have never met**, but know from the Internet [1].
- ✔ Sending or receiving a sexually suggestive text or image under the age of 18 is **considered child pornography and can result in criminal charges** [2].
- ✔ 24% of high-school age teens (ages 14 to 17) and 33% of college-age students (ages 18 to 24) have been involved in a form of **nude sexting** [3].
- ✔ Sexting is defined by the U.S. court system as “an act of sending sexually explicit materials through mobile phones.” The messages may be **text, photo, or video** [4].
- ✔ In the U.S., 8 states have enacted **bills to protect minors from sexting**, and an additional 14 states have proposed bills to legislation [5].
- ✔ **11% of teen girls ages 13 to 16** have been involved with sending or receiving sexually explicit messages [6].



How To Talk To Young People About Sexting

Although sexting can be an uncomfortable subject to discuss with young people, it is **too important not to!** One way to tackle what can be an embarrassing topic is to discuss sexting stories in the news (there are plenty!). This is what we do in our [Cyber Civics classes](#), and it provides for some rich discussion and learning opportunities (for both the students and the teacher!).

For example, in one class we discussed this story about a 15-year old boy who received an unsolicited nude photo of a girl, showed it to one friend, and ended up on a **30-day suspension from school**.

Sharing a story like this one with your own children or students allows you to debate questions like these:

- What exactly did this young man do that got him into trouble?
- What could he have done differently?
- Do you think the punishment fit the crime in this situation? Who do you think was at fault?
- Have you ever felt pressured to send or look at at "sext"?
- Do you know what the consequences of sexting are in your community?

References

1. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. "Teenage Sexting Statistics." GuardChild. Accessed April 14, 2014. .
2. Bowker, M.A., Art, and Michael Sullivan, J.D. "Sexting: Risky Actions and Overreactions." FBI. Accessed April 14, 2014. .
3. Hudson, Heather K.. "Factors Affecting Sexting Behaviors Among Selected Undergraduate Students." College of Education and Human Services, Southern Illinois University. Accessed April 14, 2014. .
4. Dictionary.com, LLC. "Sexting." Dictionary.com. Accessed April 14, 2014. .
5. National Conference of State Legislatures. "2012 Sexting Legislation." Sexting Legislation 2012. Accessed April 15, 2014. .
6. National Institute of Justice. "Much Ado About Sexting." National Criminal Justice Reference Service. Accessed April 15, 2014.

Parents Outraged Over Handling Of Klein Oak Sexting Scandal

Posted: Nov 04, 2014 3:40 PM PST
Updated: Nov 22, 2014 3:41 PM PST
By Ashley Johnson, Multimedia Journalist



MyFoxHouston - [Parents](#) are outraged over how one school district is handling a sexting scandal. Some children at Klein Oak High School have been sent to Annex for close to a month which is an alternative school. They claim the children who started everything got off the hook.

Erin Welsh says Klein Oak is showing favoritism in who they punish and how they've handled her son is unfair. Welsh says her son Donovan is your typical curious 15 year old boy.

"A grown [man](#) gets a picture on his phone he's not going to delete it right away. Let alone a 15 year old boy. They're going to get it and laugh at it and show somebody," Welsh said.

Donovan did admit to showing a nude photo of a girl to a friend but the sophomore says he never forwarded the picture and he is not the one who started the sexting scandal.