The Facts about “Sexting”

Why do kids sext?

**Sexting as Flirting**
In order to be noticed by the object of their affections, kids might feel like they need to send something racy and eye-catching.

**Sexting as Cyberbullying**
Cyber bullies can easily take a covert photo or video of their victim in the locker room, sending it around without their knowledge.

**Sexting as a Joke**
Some kids just send sexts to be funny or gross. They may upload a sexy picture to the Internet for the shock value, or just to prove to themselves that they can.

Should parents be concerned about “sexting”?

Yes, especially when you read some of the sexting statistics listed in this information sheet. Kids are not only sexting people they meet online. They are sexting boyfriends and girlfriends or potential companions. Some of the teenagers are sexting out of peer pressure. Some just do it for fun. Sexting can have school discipline as well as potential criminal consequences. The bottom line is that kids are doing it and a parent needs to be aware of the potential dangers of sexting.

**WHAT IS SEXTING?**

The term “sexting” is a combination of the words “sex” and “texting” and refers to the practice of sending sexually explicit photographs electronically, mainly by cell phone.

The most popular reasons given for forwarding “sexts” include the assumption that others would want to see them (52%), a desire to show off (35%), and boredom (26%).
LEGAL: In 2009, Utah passed a law where “sexting” between minors would be classified as a misdemeanor crime rather than a felony and the minor offender would not be required to register as a sex offender. However, if a person is over the age of 18 and in possession of, distributes (forwards the picture), or produces (takes the picture), of a minor engaged in sexually explicit acts, this person could face felony charges under Utah’s child pornography law. If found guilty of a felony, the person could face jail time, a monetary fine, and registering as a sex offender.

NON-LEGAL: Then there’s the emotional (and reputation) damage that can come from having intimate photos of yourself go to a friend who can become an ex-friend and send it to everyone you know. Not only can they be sent around; they can be distributed and archived online for people to search for pretty much forever. Don’t ruin your reputation before you have a chance to create one.

COLD HARD FACTS ABOUT SEXTING

1. “Sexting” is a misdemeanor offense if the person distributing the image is under the age of 18.
2. You may have to disclose the crime on a job application and school admissions applications.
3. Teenagers 18 or over may face jail time, if convicted.
4. You may have to register as a sex offender, if you are 18 or older.
5. If a school administrator has a reasonable suspicion that you have sexually explicit or inappropriate photos on your cell phone while at school and that possession is causing a disruption or conflict at school, the administrator can check your phone.
ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

✔ Think about the consequences of taking, sending, or forwarding a sexual picture of yourself or someone else underage. You could get kicked off of sports teams, face humiliation, lose educational opportunities, and even get in trouble with the law.

✔ Never take images of yourself that you wouldn’t want everyone—your classmates, your teachers, your family, or your employers—to see.

✔ Before hitting send, remember that you cannot control where this image may travel. What you send to a boyfriend or girlfriend easily could end up with their friends, and their friends, and their friends.

✔ If you forward a sexual picture of someone underage, you are as responsible for this image as the original sender. You could face child pornography charges, go to jail, and have to register as a sex offender.

✔ Report any nude pictures you receive on your cell phone to an adult you trust. Do not delete the message. Instead, get your parents or guardians, teachers, and school counselors involved immediately.


WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Parents need to talk to their kids and explain the short and long-term consequences of sexting. Parents should talk to their kids in a relaxed setting. Ask them what they know about it (they may not have heard the term, so "naked photo-sharing" works too). Express how you feel in a conversational, non-confrontational way. A two-way dialog can go a long way toward helping your kids understand how to minimize legal, social, and reputation risks. Parents should also teach their children to stay alert when using digital media. People aren’t always who they seem to be, even in real life, and sometimes they change and do mean things. Critical thinking about what we upload as well as download is the best protection. Parents need to monitor their kids cell phone very closely. This can be done either physically or with the help of a software service like Mobile-Spy or WebWatcher Mobile.
DIGITAL REPUTATION

Your digital reputation is made up of everything you post, say and do, online. People judge you based on what you load up on websites and how you communicate. Because content that’s posted online can be there forever, you could well be judged on how you behaved as a child well into your adult years. For example, photos and comments your child posts today may be seen by future employers. Children and young people need to be aware of their digital reputation, and learn to manage it appropriately. Everything you do online may remain there indefinitely - influencing people’s opinions of you and leaving you vulnerable to identity fraud, online stalking and cyberbullying. You need to think carefully about the personal information, photos and videos you share and who might see it. And, remember not to post anything that you don't want others to know about.

What is Digital Integrity?

*Just as having personal integrity means that you do the right thing and make the right choices without anyone watching you, having digital integrity means when you are using technology—social media, your cell phone, or the Internet, you do the right thing and make the right choices, even if no one is watching you.* You should *always* strive to maintain your good name as well as your respectable character when you are working and communicating online. *If you strive to have digital integrity, you won’t allow yourself to be a situation where you could send or receive a sext, participate in cyberbullying, or post something on social media sites that is intended to harm, embarrass, or threaten another person.*
## HOW PREVALENT IS SEXTING AMONG KIDS?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers sending or posting sexually suggestive messages</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who have sent or posted sexually suggestive content to a boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who have sent or posted sexually suggestive content to someone with whom they wanted to date or &quot;hook up&quot;</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who say it is common for sexually suggestive text messages to get shared with people other than the intended recipient.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who say it is common for nude or semi-nude photos to get shared with people other than the intended recipient.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who have sent sexually suggestive messages or images in response to such content they received</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who have felt pressured to send sexy messages or images by their female/male counterparts</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of teenagers who have sent or posted sexually suggestive content to be &quot;fun&quot; or &quot;flirtatious&quot;</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Source: [http://www.pcsndreams.com/Pages/Sexting_Statistics.html](http://www.pcsndreams.com/Pages/Sexting_Statistics.html)

For more information, please contact the Canyons School District Compliance Office at:

Civil Rights and Accommodations/Compliance Office
Canyons School District
9150 South 500 West
Sandy, UT 84070
Phone: (801) 826-5351