



## WHAT IS SEXTING?

Sexting (a portmanteau of sex and texting) refers to the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, mainly between mobile phones.



Sexting is becoming more and more prevalent in teenagers with many young people engaging in this risky activity. A recent survey by the charity Beatbullying found that 1/3 of young people had received a message, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  had received an image on the subject of sex. 85% of these "sexts" were sent from someone that the recipient knew - which clearly shows that children and young people are also instigators as well as victims.

Very often sexting can lead to cyberbullying as photos are often distributed to a wide audience using the internet. In the most extreme cases, they can lead to offline encounters and statutory rape.

## WHAT ARE THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS?

It is a crime to:

- ✦ take an indecent photograph or allow an indecent photograph to be taken;
- ✦ to make an indecent photograph (and this includes downloading or opening an image that has been sent);
- ✦ to distribute or show such an image;
- ✦ to possess with the intention of distributing images;
- ✦ to advertise;
- ✦ to possess such images.

## HOW DO YOU GET THE IMAGES REMOVED?

Contact website (ie Facebook) and ask for images to be removed. In the first instance contact the service provider, as it is the website's responsibility to take these images down.

If you have come across something you think might be illegal online, such as sexual images of children and young people, then you can report this to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF). It's their job to make sure that things like this are taken off the internet.

## WHERE CAN YOU GO FOR HELP?

Report to the police it is a criminal offence

Report to school

Seek counselling sexting can be very distressing

Talk to your parents, relatives, friends or another adult

Go to [www.cybermentors.org.uk](http://www.cybermentors.org.uk).

CyberMentors offers advice and guidance for young people who are affected by both cyber and offline bullying, by allowing them to connect online with trained "CyberMentors," who are 11-18, "Senior CyberMentors" who are 18-25, and fully trained online counsellors.

Report to CEOP [www.clickceop.net](http://www.clickceop.net)

Use the CEOP Report Button.



This can be found at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) and is also embedded in sites such as Bebo and MSN.

## **ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT YOUR OWN SEXUAL THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOUR?**

Some people struggle with sexual thoughts and behaviours towards children. Are you someone who wants to stop these thoughts and behaviours but does not know how? Stop it Now! UK and Ireland offer confidential help and support. You can call them on 0808 1000 900 or email at [help@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:help@stopitnow.org.uk)

## **WHAT CAN A PARENT OR CARER DO?**

If your children have sent any nude pictures of themselves, make sure they stop immediately. Explain that they're at risk of being charged with a criminal offence. If they've received a nude photo, make sure they haven't sent it to anyone else. Talk with your child. Stay calm, be supportive and learn as much as you can about the situation. For example, see if it was impulsive behaviour, a teen "romance" thing, or a form of harassment. Consider talking with any other teens and their parents based on what you've learned.

Some experts advise that you report the photo to your local police, but consider that, while intending to protect your child, you could incriminate another - and possibly your own child. That's why it's usually good to talk to the children and young people and their parents first. If malice or criminal intent is involved, you may want to consult a solicitor, the police, or other experts on the law, but be aware of the possibility that criminal charges could be filed against anyone involved.

## **WHAT CAN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DO?**

If a sexting photo arrives on your phone, first, do not send it to anyone else (that could be considered distribution of child pornography). Second: Talk to a parent or trusted adult. Tell them the full story so they know how to support you. And don't freak out if that adult decides to talk with the parents of others involved - that could be the best way to keep all of you from getting into serious trouble.

If the picture is from a friend or someone you know, tell them you do not want any more texts like that from them, or ask someone to talk to your friend so he or she knows sexting is against the law. You're actually doing the friend a big favour because of the serious trouble that can happen if the police get involved. If the texts keep coming, then block that sender. Unfriend them from your social networking account. Block their number on your phone. You might need to change your mobile number. If you do, make sure that only friends you trust get your new number

If you have sent an image or text and you are worried about what might happen now, there are some things that you can do to try and make sure that your texts don't get passed on and/or you don't get accused of sending inappropriate things:

You may have sent it to your boyfriend or girlfriend; if so, consider asking them to delete the message from their phone or inbox. If you have sent an image or text that you feel is now out of your control, talk to a trusted adult or contact a helpline/counsellor to work out what you can do.

You could feel you are being pressured to send them. Remember, like any form of sexual behaviour you have the right to say 'No' and to let them know that you are serious. Don't be pressured into doing something you don't want to do. If it makes you feel uncomfortable, and you're really not OK with something, then don't do it.