



**Did you know? IT IS ILLEGAL TO TAKE, MAKE OR SHARE AN INDECENT IMAGE OR VIDEO OF A CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 18 – EVEN IF IT IS CONSENSUAL**

Sexting occurs predominantly on, but is not exclusive to these apps...  
 Snapchat    Tinder    WhatsApp    Kik

Sexting involves sending and receiving explicit messages, images or videos of a sexual nature. This content is usually uploaded on a mobile device, which can then be uploaded onto social networking sites and shared further. They can be sent to or from a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, or someone your child has met online. Sexting is often described as the new flirting for children – but it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18, with police forces in England and Wales recording 6,238 underage "sexting" offences in 2016-17, a rate of 17 a day.

## What parents need to know about **SEXTING**

**BREAKING THE LAW**  
Sexting is illegal if you share, make, take or distribute an indecent image or video of a child under the age of 18. It is an offence under the Protection of Children Act (1978), the Criminal Justice Act (1988), and under Section 67 of the Criminal Justice Act (2015). Sexting or 'youth produced sexual imagery' between children is still illegal, even if they are in a relationship and any images are shared consensually.

**CHILDREN THINK IT'S HARMLESS**  
Many young people see sexting as 'harmless' or a joke, an easy way to show someone they like and trust them, or just a cool thing to do. But they may not realise the consequences of sharing personal information and how it can be potentially harmful to them in the future.

**REGRETTING THEIR ACTIONS**  
Although some children are willingly exchanging images, many may regret sharing the messages, images and videos after they have sent or uploaded them. Once it's out there, there's no going back, and your child may feel ashamed, vulnerable, worried or anxious about imagery resurfacing later, especially if a relationship or friendship has broken down.

'Sexting' was the most viewed information and advice topic on the Children's website in 2017, showing the need for people to get help.

**BULLYING, COERCION & BLACKMAIL**  
Your child may feel pressured into sexting, so they don't reveal secrets, or being asked to show someone they care for them. They may feel under pressure to give in to repeated requests or feel obliged to share sexual messages and imagery. Sexting can also expose young people to the risk of being harassed by peers, classmates or sexual predators, who then use images to extort additional photos, sexual favours, and sometimes money from victims.

**SHARING**  
Once a photo or video is out there, there's no way of knowing how many people have saved it, tagged it or shared it. Children like to show off to their peers and suddenly, an image has gone beyond its intended recipient, to classmates, friends, and even strangers. Once an image or video has been shared online, there's nothing to stop it being archived and repeatedly shared.

## Top Tips for Parents

**TALK TO YOUR CHILD**  
Encourage open dialogue about appropriate information to share with others both online and offline, discuss the word 'sexting' and ensure that they know what it is and what it involves. Show that you understand that sexting can reflect natural adolescent curiosity about nudity, bodies and exploring their sexuality, but explain why it's important to think twice before sharing something. Show that you are approachable and understanding.

**DISCUSS THE LEGALITIES**  
Children and young people may not realise that what they are doing is illegal. Ensure that your child understands that when they are aged under 18, it is against the law for anyone to take or have a sexual photo of them – even if it's a selfie, and even when the activity is consensual.

**EXPLAIN THE REPERCUSSIONS**  
Let your children know that once they have sent a message, they are no longer in control of it, and the messages, images and videos that they may intend to share with one individual may end up where the whole world can have access to them. Even if they completely trust someone, their phone might accidentally see it. And, later in life, it may affect their college reputation, employability opportunities, employers or future partners access the imagery.

**HOW TO REMOVE IMAGES**  
If an image has already been shared, either your child or yourself should speak to the person that the image was shared with and ask them to delete it. You can also use the report button on a website where the image was posted. Speak to your child's school, as they may be able to confiscate phones if they know that they have sexual imagery stored. If you believe the child was forced into sending the message, report this to the police. You or your child can also report the content to CEOP with one of their child protection advisers (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command).

**BLOCKING AND STOPPING SEXTING**  
Show your child how to use the block button on their devices and favourite apps to stop people sending them unwanted messages. You can also set up parental controls with your internet service provider or on your child's phone to stop them from accessing harmful content.

**HAS YOUR CHILD RECEIVED A SEXUAL IMAGE?**  
Firstly, reassure your child that they have done the right thing by speaking to you about the incident. Ask them if they requested the image or if they received it unwillingly. If the image has been sent to your child by an adult and you are concerned about sexual exploitation or grooming, contact CEOP immediately.

**SOURCES:** NSPCC, 2015 Review Under Pressure: What's Affected Children in April 2015. March 2016, 2nd ed., ISBN 9781851087497. NSPCC, 2016 Child Protection: What's Affected Children in April 2016. March 2016, 2nd ed., ISBN 9781851087497. NSPCC, 2016 Child Protection: What's Affected Children in April 2016. March 2016, 2nd ed., ISBN 9781851087497.

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[www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com)  
 Email us at [help@nationalonlinesafety.com](mailto:help@nationalonlinesafety.com) or call us on 0800 368 8061

Ellesmere College, Ellesmere, Shropshire SY12 9AB

Tel: 01691 622321 Fax: 01691 623286

[www.ellesmere.com](http://www.ellesmere.com)

A Woodard School

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