



Live My Digital Parental Guide

Sexting

Over
50%

of secondary school children
have communicated with
people they do not know
when using social media

What is sexting?

Sexting is the act of sending or receiving sexually explicit content such as text, video or an image. This often happens via digital devices such as mobile phones and tablets.

How sexting occurs

Sexting often takes place on social media networks such as Snapchat or Kik and the content can be shared between people in relationships, friendships or strangers. Sexting most commonly happens between two people in a relationship, but is also considered to be a method for flirting if the participants are not yet in a relationship.

Whilst sadly there are cases reported where young people have been forced into sexting through grooming, harassment or peer pressure, there are also many sexting cases involving young people who have sent sexually explicit pictures or videos of themselves without any pressure on them at all. In all cases of sexting it's imperative that your child is aware of its potential consequences.

How it makes your child feel

If your child has sent any sexually explicit content and is in control of who sees it, or wasn't pressurised into sending it, some say it can make them feel more confident, it can boost self-esteem or make them feel sexy. These are usually their motivations for sharing.

On the other hand, often those sending content lose control of it – usually when the recipient shares the content without the sender's permission, whether intentionally or accidentally, and the effects can be devastating. Sometimes the sender may not have considered that they may fall out, or break up with the person they sent it to, yet that person will still have those pictures or videos of them to use as they wish.

Whether they've been blackmailed or pressurised into sexting, or the person they shared the content with has disseminated it without your child's permission, it can leave them feeling embarrassed, ashamed and humiliated.



Jargon Buster

Revenge porn:

Distributing sexually explicit content of someone without their consent

Grooming:

Building a relationship with someone for purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children who are being groomed are often asked to send sexually explicit images or videos of themselves

Nude selfie:

A naked self-portrait photograph, usually captured using a digital device

Porn:

A term used to describe 'porn' without needing to say the word

Emoji sexting:

The use of emojis to communicate sexual messages to another person

Sexts:

The sexually explicit messages shared

Slut shaming:

A term applied, usually to women, who are considered to be promiscuous. The practice of slut shaming often occurs on social networks

Cybersex:

The act of using technology to exchange sexual messages with another person online



What to do if your child has received sexually explicit content

Escalate to your child's school or the police immediately if you discover sexually explicit content of a minor (someone under the age of 18) on their device

Talk to your child directly if you discover they have pornographic content of someone over the age of 18 on their device, just as you would approach a conversation about the "birds and the bees", trying not to pass too much judgment

Parental controls you have in place should be revisited to ensure your child isn't easily able to access pornography on their devices

Age limits on social networks, apps and games should be communicated to your child (eg. the Terms of Use on Instagram state that you must be at least 13 years old to use the service)

Escalate to your child's school and the police immediately if you have any suspicions that your child may have been groomed

Having sexting photos or videos on your digital devices

If you are under the age of 18, the law sees you as a child. Therefore, if you have any indecent images or videos of somebody who is under 18 you would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child – even if you are the same age. This is an offence under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and the Criminal Justice Act 1988.



What to do if your child has sent sexually explicit content

Legal implications of sexting should be communicated to them, so they are aware that they are breaking the law

Talk to them about the situation – how it came about, what their motivation was, how it made them feel etc. Let them open up to you and help them to manage it in their own way

Escalate to your child's school or the police to see if they might be able to support you in stopping the content from being shared further, as well as discussing any disciplinary action that needs to be taken, particularly if it's a case of revenge porn

Sending sexting photos or videos

If you are under 18 and you send, upload or forward indecent images or videos onto friends or boyfriends/girlfriends, this would also be breaking the law, even if they are photos of yourself.

Where to go for further information

There are some fantastic resources available to parents online that offer tips and advice on how to manage issues related to relationships and grooming. We recommend the following:

www.childline.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

www.internetmatters.org

www.vodafone.com/content/parents

www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.childnet.com