

## What to do if your child has been affected by sexting

If your child has been sending explicit images or videos of themselves, you may feel shocked, upset, angry, confused or disappointed. They're also likely to feel anxious about talking to you.

Where possible, give yourself time to process the information and remember they'll be watching your reactions.

- reassure them that they aren't alone
- listen and offer support – they're probably upset and need your help and advice, not criticism
- try not to shout or make them feel like it's their fault
- don't ask questions like "why have you done it" as this may stop them from opening up to you
- discuss the problem and the wider pressures that they may face, to help them to understand what's happened
- assure them that you'll do all you can to help.
- remind them that they can always talk to [Childline](#) or another trusted adult if they aren't comfortable talking directly to you.

## How to talk to your child about sexting

Every child is different, so your approach should be based on their character and your relationship with them. You could:

- outline your expectations and explain the rules of having a mobile, tablet or smartphone
- ask them what they feel is acceptable to send to people, if they'd be happy for you or a stranger or other children to see certain photos. If the answer is 'no', explain that the image, video or message is probably not appropriate to send
- make sure they're comfortable saying no, that they know their body is private and being asked to share explicit images is inappropriate
- explain to them about the importance of trust and consent in a healthy relationship. Tell them that it's not ok for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing things that they don't want to do, or to show them things that they're unhappy about.
- Let them know that they can speak to you if this ever happens



## Sexting

Sending inappropriate pictures or messages over the internet to others.

**Advice and support for parents and carers**



For further advice visit  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/>

## Get an explicit image removed

### You could:

- report the image to the site hosting it. [Net Aware](#) gives information about reporting to social media providers
- inform [CEOP](#) of the incident, if you believe the child is at risk of abuse
- contact the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) or ask the child to get in touch with [Childline](#). Together, Childline and the IWF will try to get the image removed.
- Childline is a confidential service, but to make a report on a child's behalf to the IWF we need to confirm who the child is and their date of birth. To confirm their identity young people can email Childline with a copy of their passport. This information will not be passed on without the child's permission.

### Who else can help?

CEOP's [Thinkuknow](#) give advice for parents, as well as children and young people of different ages, on staying safe online. Thinkuknow have created [short videos](#) to help parents understand why children 'sex', how to talk to them about it and what to do if their child is affected.

[Internetmatters.org](#) work to help parents keep their children safe online. They provide free advice on online issues affecting children, including [sexting](#) and [grooming](#).

[The UK Safer Internet Centre](#) gives advice and resources for parents and professionals on online safety. Their website has links to games and quizzes for [primary](#) and [secondary](#) aged children that encourages them to be safe online.

## Why talk with your child about Sexting?

It may feel awkward, but it's important to explain to children the risks of sexting, how to stay safe and remind them that they can talk to you if something ever makes them feel scared or uncomfortable.

### What is Sexting?

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexually explicit messages. They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages.

Sexting may also be called:

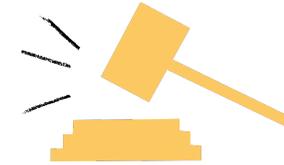
- trading nudes
- dirties
- pic for pic.

### Why do young people sext?

There are many reasons why a young person may want to send a naked or semi-naked picture, video or message to someone else.

1. joining in because they think that 'everyone is doing it'
2. boosting their self-esteem
3. flirting with others and testing their sexual identity
4. exploring their sexual feelings
5. to get attention and connect with new people on social media
6. they may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent

## What the law says



Sexting can be seen as harmless, but creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. A young person is breaking the law if they:

- take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend
- share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age
- possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created.

However, as of January 2016 in England and Wales, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but that taking formal action isn't in the public interest.

Crimes recorded this way are unlikely to appear on future records or checks, unless the young person has been involved in other similar activities which may indicate that they're a risk.