



## BEFORE YOU PRESS SEND

### What could happen to it?

Once a picture or video is sent, it's no longer in your control. The messages can be shown to anyone and posted anywhere on the internet.

### Who might see it?

If it's something you wouldn't want your parents, teachers or friends seeing, you shouldn't send it.

### Who are you sending it to?

Is it someone you trust? Would you feel uncomfortable doing something sexual with them in person? Would you be able to have a serious conversation about sex with them? Would they be okay with you saying, "No," because you're uncomfortable?

### Why do you want to send it?

Never send a picture just to impress someone. It's important to understand that sexting can have the opposite effect. You wouldn't want to risk having a bad reputation.

## STOP THE TREND!

### What can you do to stop the sexting craze?

There are several things teens can do to protect themselves and others from the negative effects of sexting. These include:

- Don't send explicit images or clips of yourself to anyone.
- Report any messages you received to a trusted adult.
- If you know someone who is forwarding inappropriate pictures to others, encourage them to stop.
- Have respect for yourself. Understand that if someone needs an inappropriate picture to like you, they aren't worth your time.

Sexting has evolved into a major issue in today's society. While many young people have learned that sexting is wrong, it is still happening. Stand up for yourself and others and put a stop to this behavior. Technology should be used responsibly without hurting others or yourself in the process.

## TEST YOURSELF!

### What Do You Know?

1. An image can exist in cyber space for years.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Sending an explicit text message is not considered sexting if no photos are attached.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Sexting is sometimes considered child pornography.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. Explicit text messages or e-mails can be tracked back to the source.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. Private messages are safe from hackers, as long as you password protect your phone and internet.
  - a. True
  - b. False

Answers: 1. a; 2. b; 3. a; 4. a; 5. b

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### STAY SAFE SERIES

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# SEXTING



# NOT SO PRIVATE

# WHAT IS "SEXTING"??

Today the information highway is quickly advancing and technology is revolutionizing the way we communicate. While these times are exciting for teens, they can be very dangerous as well, especially when it comes to sexting.

Sexting is the act of sending, receiving or forwarding sexually explicit pictures, videos or messages via cell phone. Teens sext to show off, to show interest in someone or to prove commitment. While some believe sexting is fun and innocent, the consequences can be very devastating. Sexting is problematic enough, but the real challenge comes when the content of these messages are shared. As many teens have found out, you can't always trust the recipient and once a photo is sent, you lose all control.

## THE FOREVER MISTAKE

### The Facts About Sexting

Once an image or clip is sent:

- It can be deliberately or accidentally leaked.
- It can exist in cyberspace for years.
- It can be traced back to its source.
- Private images can be stolen and published by people who "hack" into others' phones and internet accounts.

## KNOW THE RISKS

Sexting can expose you to risks that greatly impact your life.

- Images and clips can very quickly be shared abroad.
- Sex offenders and pedophiles can get hold of explicit images or clips sent over texts.
- You could be charged for producing or disseminating child pornography and become a registered sex offender.
- Future employers often check social media sites for inappropriate content posted by or about job seekers.
- If posted to the internet, anyone can find the images using online search engines.



## THE TEXT THAT HURTS

### Consequences of Sexting

#### Emotional Effects

- When you send an explicit picture or clip, there are no guarantees that it will remain private and in many cases they don't. As a result of a fight or breakup, the explicit content is mass distributed causing the person in the pictures to feel embarrassed and humiliated.
- When sexts go public, many times it results in bullying. There are countless stories of young teens being bullied to the point of ending their life. These individuals were harassed, excluded and ostracized.
- Having private images shared amongst your peers can cause extreme guilt and shame. Many teens who participate in sexting regret having done so. It affects their self-esteem and leaves them feeling vulnerable.
- The consequences that come with sexting can cause a teen to feel hopeless and depressed, sometimes even resulting in suicide.



#### Legal Effects

When teens participate in sexting it leads to serious issues. Law enforcement is currently investigating teens throughout the nation for sending explicit photos of themselves. The consequences of this activity range from school suspension to felony charges.

- Teens who send explicit content, receive this content or forward these images can all face charges for distributing child pornography.
- Jail time isn't the only legal risk for sexting. Teens risk having to register as a sex offender as well. This is something that is likely to follow them for the rest of their lives.

#### Effects on Your Reputation

- Even if you've only sexted once, it could damage your reputation. Just one bad choice could overshadow the positive image your peers had of you. Sexting can damage your relationship with friends, family and boyfriend/girlfriend. Just one photo could end up defining who you are for a long time.
- Your friends and family could be put in an uncomfortable situation because they overhear others talking about you. It may be easier for friends to cut ties with you than be involved with the situation.
- Others may only want to date you because they think you will send them indecent photos or clips also. Even worse, you could attract online predators or pedophiles.



## RUINED LIVES

Andrew and Kristen were seniors who had been dating since their sophomore year of high school. Andrew was quarterback of the football team and Kristen was head cheerleader. They seemed to have the perfect relationship. That all changed when a rumor started that Kristen cheated on Andrew with his best friend, Brian.

Shortly after the rumor started, inappropriate photos of Kristen started circulating around the school. In less than a week, the photos had been leaked to students at four different high schools in the area. Kristen couldn't go anywhere without being harassed. She was even receiving hateful messages on Facebook from people she didn't even know.

Eventually, Kristen's parents found out about the messages and confronted her. She was completely humiliated. Her best friends wouldn't speak to her and she felt totally alone. One night, Kristen's mom went to her room to check on her and found that she had hung herself. After this, the police became involved and they traced the photo back to its source, Andrew. Andrew was charged for distributing child pornography and lost all his football scholarships. He had to register as a sex offender and his family was forced to move from his childhood home one block from school.

## UNDER PRESSURE

### Refusal Tips for Kids

It's not always easy for someone to keep their cool in the face of peer pressure. Here are a few suggestions on how to say "NO" if someone asks you to send explicit pictures or texts:

- "I heard your question, did you hear my answer?"
- "My parents check my text messages. I don't want them reading your request?"
- "Nah, I'm not comfortable doing that."