

**Respect me.
Don't sext me.**

Sexting information sheet for students

What is sexting?

Sexting is a term created by the media to describe the practice of creating, sending and receiving sexually suggestive, semi-nude, nude images or text messages. It most commonly refers to material sent using mobile phones and sometimes webcams.¹

This includes blogs, posts on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter and images or clips from Skype or YouTube.

Sexually explicit content is sexually offensive by societal standards, for example nude or semi-nude images, material depicting people engaged in sexual activity or in sexually suggestive poses.

Many young people think that sexting is a fun way to flirt but it is also risk-taking behaviour that is usually done with little or no regard for consequences.

Facts about sexts

Sexts have no geographical boundaries. An image or clip can:

- Be leaked accidentally or deliberately.
- Circulate in cyberspace for years even if you think it has been deleted.
- Be traced back to its source.

Phones and internet accounts can be 'hacked' by other people who may steal or publish privately stored images.



Risks related to sexting

Sending a sext to someone who does not wish to receive it is illegal. It will expose you to risks that have huge implications for later life, including:

- Images can be shared with a very large audience quickly and sexts can circulate in cyberspace for years.
- Sex offenders and paedophiles copy sext images.
- You may be charged with producing and disseminating child pornography or be put on the Sex Offender Register.
- Future employers check social media sites for inappropriate content posted by job seekers or posted about them by others.
- Future/prospective boyfriends or girlfriends will find the images in a Google search.
- From 2008 - 2011 more than 450 child pornography charges have been laid in Australia against youths between the ages of 10 and 17, including 113 charges of "making child exploitation material".

Legal issues around sexting

Australian law says that anyone under 18 who is involved in sexting is at risk of being charged under child pornography laws, even if they wanted to do it and felt comfortable doing it. For those under 18 it may be illegal to:

- **Take** a sexy image or clip of yourself: this is the creation of child pornography.
- **Send** a sexy image or clip of yourself: this is transmission of child pornography, even if you wanted to do it and felt comfortable doing it.
- **Receive** and keep a sexy image or clip of someone else under 18, whether you asked for it or not: this is possession of child pornography.
- **Forward** a sexy or suggestive image of someone who is under 18.
- **Ask** someone under 18 to send you a naked or semi-naked photo of him or herself. This is soliciting child pornography.

Anti-stalking laws prohibit the constant uploading of unflattering (but not illegal) images, offensive texts or memes. (Example of a meme: someone adds text to an existing image that is online, and posts their edited version. Internet memes are usually unflattering and can be mean or abusive).

1 "About sexting" by Parent Line www.parentline.org.au/Page.aspx?element=828&category=9

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Consequences of sexting

There are several important consequences of sexting:

Emotional	When someone realises that their sexy clip or photo has been seen by more people than they intended, they may end up feeling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilty • Embarrassed • Ashamed • Regretful • Anxious.
Psychological	Psychological consequences include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble sleeping and eating • Difficulty getting up and going to school • Difficulty getting to part-time jobs and other commitments • Decreased performance at school • Depression • Feeling suicidal.
Legal	Young people under 18 are at risk of getting a criminal record if they take part in sexting.
Social and Reputation	Sexting can damage personal relationships with friends, boyfriend/girlfriend and family, as well as damaging a young person's reputation. This may result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classmates and friends thinking differently about someone after a sexting incident. A photo can end up defining who you are for a long time. • The end of a relationship when trust is broken by showing or sharing a private sext. • Loss of a current job, scholarship or position. • Future academic opportunities being affected. • Future career opportunities being restricted. • Entry into certain countries being forbidden because of a child pornography charge.

What to do ...

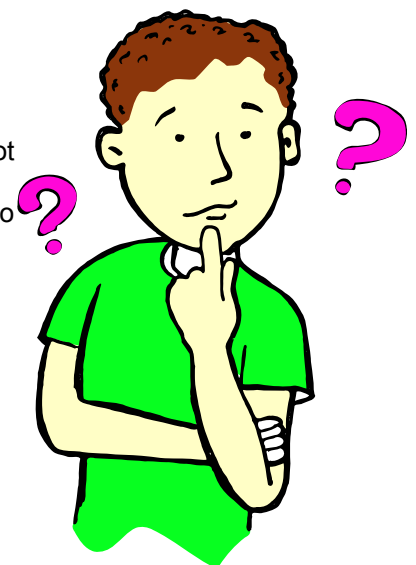
If you receive a sexually explicit text, image or video clip

- If this is a one-off incident or you know that someone is being silly, delete the sext. Tell the person not to do it again. Then forget about it.
- If you have received several sexts from the same person or a sext makes you uncomfortable, talk to your parents or contact your local police station. Do not delete the images.
- If you do not want to report to the police, delete the items and tell the sender to stop.
- Never forward a sext to anyone else.

If you are asked to take and send a picture

If this happens think about:

- Why the person has asked for the photo. Do you think that someone who cares about you would put you at risk.
- Think about how you would feel if the sext was accidentally or deliberately leaked and seen by other people.
- Take some time out to think about it. This often helps to put things in perspective.



If you choose to say no, remember that everyone needs to say no sometimes even to people they care about. Saying no does not mean that you don't like or care about him or her, or that you disrespect him or her.

If you do not feel confident about saying no, it may help to think of your reasons for saying no, and explain them to your boy or girlfriend. This will help him or her understand that you still care about him or her but need to say no. It may also

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help to practice saying no. Some things you might say include:

- "I don't think that would be good for me/us."
- "I don't want to get in trouble."
- "I'm not ready for that yet."
- "You've got to be kidding."

Your boy or girlfriend might be frustrated, annoyed, disappointed, sad, or even angry when you say no. If they care about you and respect you, they will also respect your decision and will not hold it against you. If they pressure you to change your mind or hold your choices against you they probably don't care about you or respect you, and may even be controlling or abusive. If they are like this you should consider whether you want to continue to be in a relationship with them.²

The SECASA website has some zapps for you to download – images that you can send instead of a sext that will help you refuse in a gentle way. www.secasa.com.au/pages/respect-me-dont-sext-me/zapps

If you have already taken and sent a picture

If this happens you should:

- Delete the sext from your phone, computer or wherever it may be stored.
- Ask the person who received it to delete the sext from their phone or computer immediately.

If you are concerned that the sext may already have been sent to other people, you may need independent legal advice from a specialist legal service such as **Victoria Legal Aid** or **Youth Law**.

If you ask for a sext and they say no?

In relationships, sexual or not, each party has the right to say no to anything they don't feel comfortable doing. If you really care about someone you will not want them to do something they don't want to do just to please you, particularly something that puts them at risk.

When things don't go our way it is only natural to feel any number of negative or unpleasant emotions; sadness, anger, hopelessness, frustration etc. These feelings are part of life, and we all have to learn to live with them.

If a friend says they have been asked to send a sext?

"I asked my best friend if I should (send a sext) or not. She said the best thing a best friend could say to me that day, no. She told me I was better than that and that I shouldn't have to send a photo for him to like me... If he gets angry at you for saying no, in the end, he was really not worth your time. He should love you for who you are and not what your body looks like." (13 year old female)³

The behaviour of friends can play a key role in keeping each other safe. If your friend confides in you about being asked to send a sext, advise them to weigh up the positives (e.g., peer acceptance, looking "cool," feeling excitement about trying something new) and negatives (e.g. the sext being posted on the internet or passed around the school) before acting.



² Mostly from "How to Say No", TeenHelp.com www.teenhelp.com/teen-issues/how-to-say-no.html

³ "Stories" by Anonymous 13 yo girl. Say no to Sexting. www.sayno.net.au/stories

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About SECASA

The South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault (SECASA) provides services to children and adults, both female and male, who have been sexually assaulted. See our website: www.secasayouth.com.au

Useful contacts

Victoria Police

Phone: 000

Victoria Legal Aid

Phone: 03 9269 0120

Web: www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

Youth Law

Phone: 03 9611 2412

Web: youthlaw.asn.au

Kids Helpline

Phone: 1800 55 1800

Web: www.kidshelp.com.au

CyberSmart

Web: www.cybersmart.gov.au

Crimestoppers

Phone: 1800 333 000

Web: crimestoppers.com.au



Download the Respect Me – Don't Sext Me pack

The complete "Respect Me – Don't Sext Me" pack, including information sheets, games and other resources is available online at: www.secasa.com.au/pages/respect-me-dont-sext-me

Please give us your feedback

Please give us your feedback at surveys.secasanetwork.com/index.php?sid=76195



SECASA website



Respect Me, Don't Sext Me Website



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