

Sexting: Advice for Teens

May 2016

Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D. and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D. | Cyberbullying Research Center

Sharing pictures with romantic partners is a natural part of any relationship. It's important, however, that you are doing so safely, responsibly, and appropriately. Exchanging explicit (nude) images is not only uncool, it's illegal. It can get you in trouble with your parents, your school, and even the police. Think twice before taking an explicit picture of yourself, or sending one of yourself—or someone else—to another person. You never know where it could end up or what kind of trouble you could find yourself in. Follow these basic principles to keep your privates private.

1. Delete any explicit images sent to you. Even having these images on your phone could land you in a heap of trouble.

2. Do not distribute explicit images. If someone sends you an explicit image of themselves or someone else, so not pass it on to anyone else. Try to think about how you would feel if someone sent similar pictures of you to someone else that you didn't know or wouldn't want to see.

3. Ignore or flat-out reject any requests from others for inappropriate images. It is just not worth it, no matter how much you like the other person—even if you think you can trust them. The potential risk is just too high. If they really care about you, they will understand.

4. Block individuals who make you uncomfortable with how they talk to you (or what they send to you).

5. Distract the person requesting inappropriate pictures from you. Engage them in conversation about something else, or direct them to a cool YouTube video you just saw, or an app you think they would like. If they continue to ask about the pics, let them know that they should just chill out.

6. Don't support your own objectification. You are not a piece of meat. You don't want people to like you because of your body, but because of your mind and heart. Giving in and sending explicit images just feeds their appetite for more, and continues to devalue your worth.

7. Sexting doesn't define a healthy, functional romantic relationship. Sure, it's fun, flirtatious, and

risqué, but remember that these images could be seen by a wider audience (including your parents, teachers, or the police).

8. Send images that are *suggestive*, but not *explicit*. Keep private parts covered at all times. It's fine to send your partner a picture, just make sure it's PG-13 and not X-rated. Even so, realize that these too may be broadcast to others. If you wouldn't be concerned if your whole school (or grandma!) saw it, it's probably ok.



9. If you receive (or someone shows you) an explicit image of someone you know, contact that person to tell them that their images are being circulated. You would want someone to tell you if an image of yours like that was going around.

10. Inform an adult you trust if you are concerned about the well-being of the person in the image. If you are worried about the person who is in the picture, whether they are a friend or not, you may need to get help from an adult.