

ONLINE SAFETY TIPS

Internet and Cell Phone Safety: It's a Teen's World

There's a world to explore. You may like honing your talents at school and achieving your best grades, but you also know that adventures await and there are many new things to discover. You can begin your explorations on the Internet, but it presents risks as well as opportunities. The same is true of all the new electronic wireless devices that everyone seems to carry. The tips below are good ones to follow, and they can be a springboard for talking with parents, teachers, and school counselors if you ever need more information or face a dilemma about your Internet or wireless use.

- Don't open files from strangers.
- Protect your personal information online, on your cell phone, or in social networking sites unless it's information you're comfortable with sharing with all the world.
- Remember, potential employers and college admissions officers search for information on you on social networking sites while they are weighing their decisions.
- Never arrange to meet someone in person you have talked to online. Stick to the friends you know.
- Don't open emails from someone you know is a bully. And don't harass anyone online or by email or text message. If you get a message that is meant to bully someone else, don't forward it.
- Don't send a picture of someone else by email or text message without their prior permission.
- Never send anyone a revealing or other inappropriate picture of yourself or someone else by Internet or text message, even just to flirt. Depending on your age, you could be charged under pornography laws with being a sex offender—with a police record that will last for life.
- If you are being bullied or harassed, whether by text message or photo, tell a parent or your guardian. You're never too old to ask for help.
- Protect your computer with a password—one that contains upper- and lowercase letters and numbers. Make them hard to figure out. Don't tell anyone your password, not even your friends.
- If someone sends a mean or threatening message, don't respond. Save it or print it out and show it to an adult.
- Learn what a firewall is and how it can protect your computer.
- Keep your antivirus and anti-spamware software up to date.

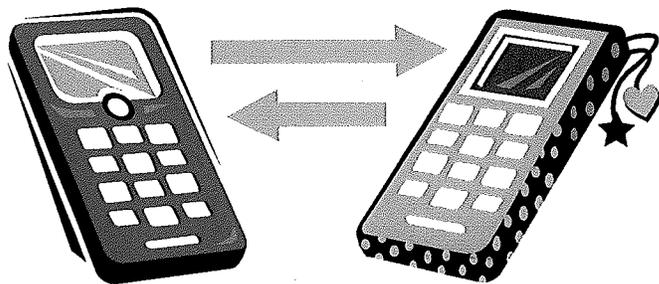


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SEXTING: HOW TEENS CAN STAY SAFE



Sexting is sending sexually explicit text or photographs via mobile devices. Sometimes teens share the photographs voluntarily, but at other times teens may be coerced into taking or sending the photographs. Once the photos are sent, some kids use them to bully, harass, intimidate, or embarrass victims online or via mobile devices.

Sexting between minors is a felony and can have serious legal consequences. You could be charged with a crime. If convicted you could be labeled as a sex offender for the rest of your life.

Think before you "sext." Follow these important tips to keep safe:

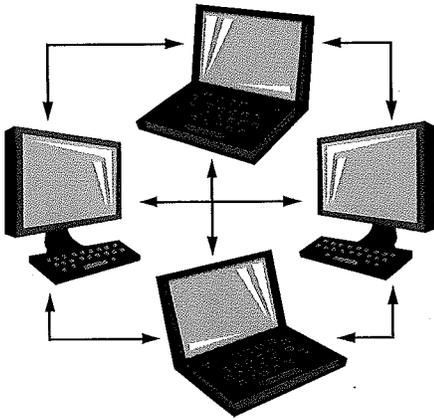
- Never send or post sexually provocative pictures. Once the picture is out there, it will never go away. Don't risk your future college or employment hopes and your reputation with family, friends, teachers, and neighbors who could see the photos.
- Remember that healthy relationships should be based on mutual respect, not just sexual attraction. Sometimes, boyfriends and girlfriends share intimate photos with each other. Since one photo can reach thousands via websites and mobile devices, make sure you never share these photos with friends and classmates.
- Refuse to be pressured into sending explicit pictures. If someone threatens you or tries to force you to send a picture, talk to an adult you trust.
- Never open or forward explicit pictures from people you don't know. An online friend that you've never met or don't know in person is really a stranger.
- Use caution with devices like computer webcams. Always turn them off or close the lens to prevent prying eyes from seeing too much.
- If someone keeps sending you explicit pictures, tell a parent or trusted adult. You need to understand that the adult may have to involve law enforcement or school administrators to help resolve the matter and keep you from getting into a more serious situation.
- Talk to your friends about sexting. If someone you know is sharing explicit pictures, encourage them to stop before they get into trouble. If necessary, tell a parent or other trusted adult. Good friends try to keep each other safe.



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SAFE SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social Butterflies



You've heard their names before: MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, Xanga, Twitter. They're all forms of social media where people go online to chat with their friends, make new friends, and exchange information. Social networking sites are easy to use and understand. Their purpose is to bring people closer together. They let users create personal profiles, add photos, write in a public journal or blog, send messages to others, and invite people to become their online friends—all with just a few clicks of the mouse. When used responsibly, these sites present wonderful social opportunities.

You can stay safe by following the tips below.

- Some social networking sites require that users be at least 13 years of age, and sometimes even 18, to create an account. Don't pretend you're older than you really are. That day will come soon enough!

- Be careful about posting your current location or your upcoming plans. You may not want everyone in your network to have that information.
- Don't post any identifying information on a social website. This includes your full name, your phone number, and your address.
- Be careful of any links that ask you to post your social network information on an outside site. These sites are often created by scammers looking to steal your account and scam your friends in your name.
- Investigate and understand the privacy options of the social network you intend to use or are using, and make sure they work the way you think they do.
- Most social networking websites let users set their profiles to private so that only their friends—usually defined as people that know their full name or email address—can contact them. Make sure your profile is set to private.
- Just because you are using privacy settings, you should still be careful with your personal or financial information; you can't be sure with whom your friends might share the information.
- Don't accept requests or messages from people you don't know. They might be scam artists.
- Never post pictures of a sexual nature of yourself or someone else online.
- Be aware that online information lives forever. Be careful about what you post. College admissions personnel and job recruiters often check out personal information on social websites while weighing their decisions. One day, this will be very important.
- Some people you may meet in social websites may not be who they say they are. They may pretend to be someone else. You should never meet face-to-face with someone you've met online.
- Never give out your password to anyone but your parent or guardian.

If you see something that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your parent or guardian right away. Likewise, tell them if anything happens online that hurts or scares you.



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SEXTING: HOW PARENTS CAN KEEP THEIR KIDS SAFE

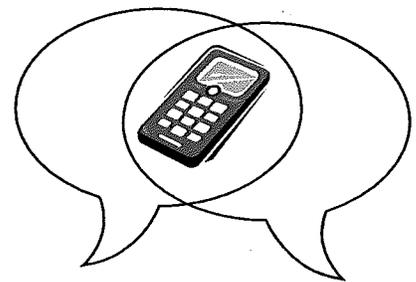
A dangerous new practice can have serious legal and psychological consequences for your teen. It's called sexting—sending sexually explicit text or photographs from mobile devices. The photographs are often shared voluntarily, but sometimes a young person may be coerced into taking or sending these photographs. Once the photos are sent, they can be used to bully, harass, intimidate, or embarrass victims online or via mobile devices.

Sexting can be a felony. Some teenagers who have sent or received explicit pictures have been charged with possession of child pornography. If convicted, your teen could be labeled as a sex offender for the rest of his or her life.

In many sexting situations, the photos shared between boyfriends and girlfriends are often forwarded and shared with friends and classmates. Access to technology means that one photo can reach thousands in just a few hours via websites and mobile devices.

The National Crime Prevention Council has valuable tips to help prevent your teen from becoming a sexting victim.

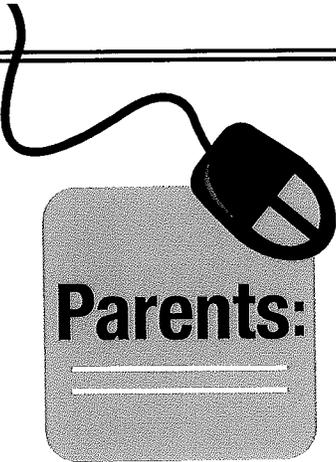
- Teach, don't preach. Use recent news stories as "teachable moments" to talk to your teen about your guidelines for safe Internet, cell phone, and social media behavior.
- Encourage your teen to think before he or she sends or posts pictures and other personal information. Remember that every post from your teen is an electronic fingerprint that can damage his or her college careers, future employment opportunities, and reputation with friends, family, and neighbors.
- Stay calm. If your son or daughter confesses to sending or forwarding nude pictures, be supportive but take action. Tell him or her to stop immediately and delete any such files. Explain the risks and consequences of the behavior.
- If an inappropriate photo is being forwarded without the person's permission, consider talking to the teen or the parents of the teen who is forwarding the photos. If necessary, report the situation to local law enforcement or school administrators and be mindful of the potential criminal consequences.



- Talk with other parents. Chances are other parents are going through the same struggles as you to keep kids safe. Consider sharing your situation and the tips you've learned.
- Remind teens that healthy relationships should be based on mutual respect, not just sexual attraction. Stress that boyfriends and girlfriends shouldn't pressure them into sending explicit pictures.
- Ask your teen's school to address sexting by talking about what teens can do to prevent it, the consequences for offenders, and how to support the victims of sexting.
- Get help if you suspect your teen has been a victim of sexting. Talk with local victim service providers to get the right support for your child.



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Parents: ONLINE SAFETY TIPS

PARENTS: Add Online Safety to the List

- Talk with your children about the benefits and risks of Internet and wireless phone use.
- Ask your children what they do online, what games they play, and what websites they visit. Make sure they aren't playing violent video games.
- Go online with your children. Have them show you what they do online.
- Make a list of any websites you find that your think your children will enjoy, and share the list with them.
- Make a list of any websites you think are inappropriate, and tell your children not to visit them or purchase parental control software from a commercial vendor.
- Agree with your children on rules about what they can and cannot do online, when they can go on the Internet, and how long they can stay.
- Keep the computer in a central area of the house where you can observe your child's behavior.
- Agree to a contract for family cell phone use with your child.
- Ask your children who they visit online and who they email or text.
- Set limits on how many messages or how much money children can spend on their wireless use each month.
- Tell your children never to give out personal information, such as their real names, school names, or their home or school addresses.
- Tell your children never to agree to meet online acquaintances in person.
- Tell your children never to harass anyone online.
- Being bullied online or in a text message is serious; make sure your children know they can come to you for help if this happens to them.
- Tell your children never to send a picture of someone to another person by email or text message without the prior permission of that person.
- Make sure your children know that if anything online or in a text message makes them feel uncomfortable, they can come to you and tell you about it.
- Make sure your children know that if they feel uncomfortable with something they receive online or by text message, or that they are in trouble because of something that happened online, that they can come to you for help. Remember, your children may need help, and penalties such as removing the computer or restricting access to a wireless device can be counterproductive. If your children come to you, listen to them and don't judge them.



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