



How Teens Can Stay Safe

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“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 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. Do you really want to 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 or seek assistance from law enforcement.
- **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.