

# Sexting: Are your kids doing it?

As useful as a mobile phone is, it's pretty dangerous as well. Read this to keep up with the latest trend that may exploit or harm your child, sexting.



Some parents may be skeptical that their kid might be sexting.

Does your tween or younger child have a phone? Then you probably should be worried about them using their phone for sexting. Most parents would probably be skeptical and doubt that their seemingly innocent child could even know what the word sexting means, let alone do it.

However, it's better to be safe than sorry. Learn more about sexting and how it can affect your child if she is doing it, and what you can do to prevent it — before it's too late!

## What is sexting?

Sexting is when you exchange sexually explicit text or images through mobile picture messages, the Internet or with the use of a webcam. Young people also call it cybersex or a nudie.

## How common is sexting?

A survey done in the US earlier this year by the Pediatrics Journal (the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics) proves that kids as young as 12 are involved in sexting. This survey shows that 22% of a total of 410 7<sup>th</sup> grade students (12- to 14-year-olds) had participated in sexting. 17% had only sent texts and the remaining 5% had sent texts and pictures.



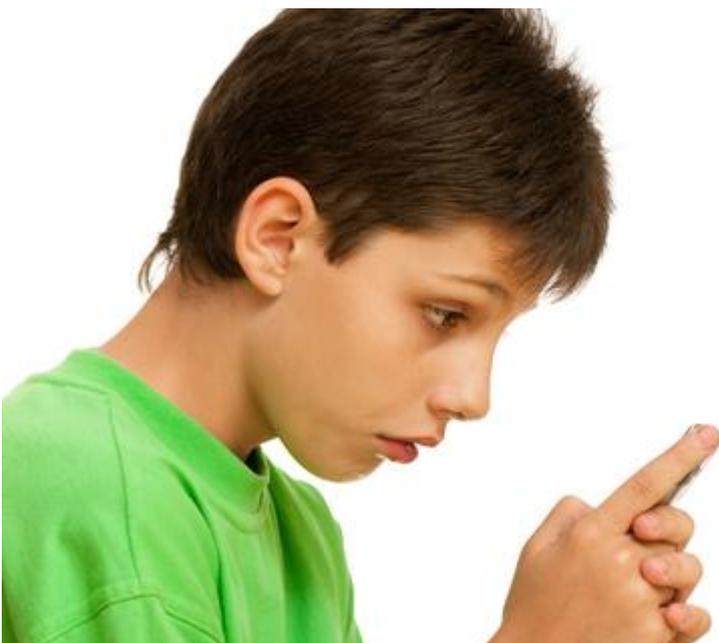
Kids and parents need to understand that sexting can have devastating repercussions.

## What's wrong with sexting?

If you catch your child sexting and they throw this question at you, here's what you need to explain to them. Well, for starters, it is illegal — especially when a picture is sent and said picture features a young child.

It is also important to know that pictures that are shared via the Internet, posted on social media and sent through text messages are permanent and can be shared with a limitless number of people.

Once these pictures are shared, the receiver, the person in the picture and the sender could potentially face cyber bullying and receive unwanted attention. As a result, it could cause tremendous emotional distress to these kids and their families.



Girls are not the only ones who fall victim to sending their pictures to others. Boys should also be careful about to whom they choose to send their pictures.

## How can you prevent your child from sexting?

Be upfront about rules when handing them a phone

If you have made the decision to give your child their own phone, list down all the rules and explain each and every one to them.

Always monitor phone usage

As part of your 'rules,' it might be a good idea to state that you will constantly be checking on their phone usage. This includes monitoring their messages, photo galleries, Internet usage and friend lists on social networks. Extend this to any other devices they use, like tablets and laptops.



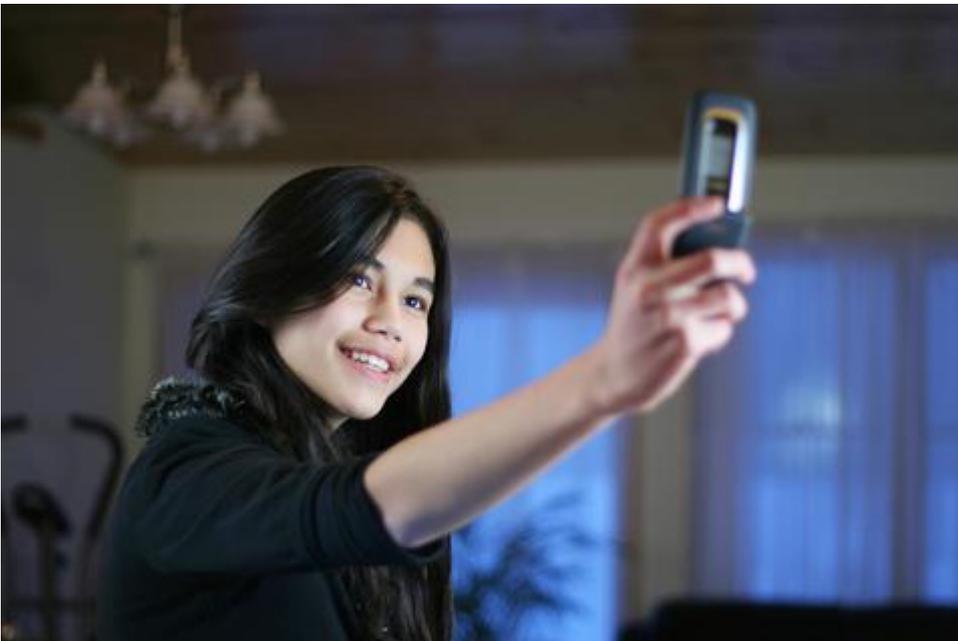
It's always good to keep an eye on your child's phone usage.

Set up controls

You can set controls where only you can download apps. If your child needs an app you haven't heard about, do your research and go through the details of it with him or her.

Talk to them about sexting

As previously stated, it is a wise idea to talk to your child about sexting and its dangers, even if he or she may not be doing it.



Set limitations on the pictures they take. Innocent selfies that are shared with close friends are often harmless.

## Set limitations on pictures taken

A firm rule needs to be in place about what kind of pictures your kids can and cannot take or share. Tell them that it is absolutely not ok to share nude or semi-nude pictures, even if it is with someone they trust. Extend this rule to pictures taken on their laptops or tablets and shared or posted on social media.

## Limitations on phone usage

Think about keeping your child's phone with you at the times they are home and do not need to use it – especially at night time. You can use this time to monitor the phone or check for 'red flag' messages.



Make sure your young child, tween or teen knows how to say 'no' to strangers' demands for pictures and friend requests.

## Talk to your child about 'friending' strangers

'Friending' is when you add new contacts to your social media accounts as friends. Tell your child that they can only 'friend' people they know and that they are not allowed to add strangers – especially those who use flattery to get added as a friend.

## Make sure they are comfortable saying 'no'

Explain to your child that their body is private, and that they can be direct and say no to anyone who requests for pictures of it.

## Tell them that you are open to talking anytime

Make sure your child knows that you can help them out in any situation and that you should be the first person they should come to if they need help. Reassure them that you will always try and understand them, and that you will support them no matter what.



Be open to talking to your child about anything and everything. Addressing a topic like sexting even before it happens is a good idea.

Here are some resources to help you deal with this subject, especially when it comes to discussing a topic like sexting with your child.

[www.thatnotcool.com](http://www.thatnotcool.com) gives some great tips on how to handle phones and other devices in a responsible manner. You can check this site out together with your child. It also shows kids how they can say no to anyone who requests for their picture.

Here's a good video done by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), about the consequences of sharing images. It's a bit lengthy but drives the dangers of sexting home very clearly.

Ref.: <http://ph.theasianparent.com/sexting/>

Look MUCH more here: [www.media.aboutphilippines.ph](http://www.media.aboutphilippines.ph)