

ADVICE FROM WEBWISE

Sexting: Talking Points for Parents

For many parents of teens, sexting can be a big concern. Talking to your child can be the best way to ease concerns and ensure your child is informed on the risks of sharing intimate images.

Firstly, it is important to note that sexting is not a normal part of teenage life. It is an activity in which the majority of teenagers do not partake. It also must be said that sexting doesn't necessarily lead to harm. However as **all underage sexting is illegal** it is something that should be dealt with.

At the same time, there are plenty of cases where sexting has gone wrong and the content shared in confidence has been misused. When this happens there can be serious, negative consequences for the well-being of those involved.

It's important to make your child aware of the risks of sharing online and how to protect them from these risks. Here's a few important talking points for parents:

- Talk to your child on **what types of images and videos they think are ok to share.** Children should always think before they send any images, videos or messages. A helpful rule here is the 'Granny Rule' – ask your child if they'd be happy if their Gran saw the image. If they say no, then the image is too inappropriate to send to another person.
- Talk to your child about **what to do if they are asked to send images** of themselves.
- Remind your child that **once an image is sent, they have no control over what happens** the image.
- A big part of teenage life is making new friends on and off-line. Unfortunately, Irish teens have become victims of webcam blackmail and sextortion. Children should be reminded that **not everyone we meet online is who they say they are.** It can be easy to create fake profiles and pretend to be someone else on a social network.
- Discuss **the importance of being respectful to others online.** Children may not understand how harmful sharing intimate images of others can be.
- Peer pressure can play a big part in why teens act and behave in certain ways. **Ensure your child is comfortable with saying no**

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