

What is "Sexting?"

- "Sexting" means *sex-texting*.
- It is the sending or receiving of inappropriate words or photos over a cell phone text or picture message.
- Messages can also be exchanged through social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.
- Sexting is not the same as flirting, and it can have serious consequences.



Information for Victims of Cyber Bullying

If you or someone you know has been a victim of cyber bullying, or bullying as the result of inappropriate content sent over cell phones or the internet, don't be a victim—be an activist.

- Tell a teacher, counselor, administrator, or another adult in your school. Know that a student's safety and well-being at school is every adult's number one priority. We are here to help.
- If you receive an inappropriate message that could damage someone's reputation, be responsible and report it to an adult. Do not continue to send the message to others.

Community Resources

W.H.A.T—Wilmington Health Access for Teens

910-790-9949

Websites for Students and Parents

www.safeteens.com

www.connectsafely.org

www.nhcs.net

Have Questions or Want More Information?

Contact Hannah Griesbauer, NHCS Behavior Specialist

Phone: 910-254-4188 Email: hgriesba@nhcs.net

Sources

- The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
 - www.thinkbeforeyoutext.com
 - www.msnbc.com

Think Before You Press "Send"

A guide for students and parents about Internet and cell phone safety

New Hanover County Schools
Wilmington, North Carolina

What You Need To Know

Tips for Students

1.) Don't assume anything you send or post is going to remain private. 40% of teens and young adults say they have had a sexually suggestive message (originally meant to be private) shown to them and 20% say they have shared such a message with someone other than the person for whom it was originally meant.

2.) There is no changing your mind in cyberspace—anything you send or post will never truly go away. Think about it: Even if you have second thoughts and delete a racy photo, there is no telling who has already copied that photo and posted it elsewhere.

3.) Don't give in to the pressure to do something that makes you uncomfortable, even in cyberspace. More than 40% of teens and young adults say "pressure from guys" is a reason girls and women send and post sexually suggestive messages and images. More than 20% of teens and young adults say "pressure from friends" is a reason guys send and post sexually suggestive messages and images.

4.) Consider the recipients reaction. Just because a message is meant to be fun doesn't mean the person who gets it will see it that way.

5.) Nothing is truly anonymous. It is important to remember that even if someone only knows you by screen name, online profile, phone number or email address, that they can probably find you if they try hard enough.

"Sexting" In The News

Recently, "sexting" has seen lots of attention in the media. Whether it's a celebrity or an average high-school student, it seems that no one is safe from the consequences of this type of behavior. Here are a few examples:

- **September 2007: Vanessa Hudgens, star *High School Musical* sent a nude photo to then-boyfriend Zac Efron. The photos were leaked all over the internet and Vanessa faced public humiliation.**
- **December 2007: Miley Cyrus, star of Disney's *Hannah Montana*, had semi-nude photos of her posted on the internet.**
- **December 2008: A group of teens employed by a KFC in California took semi-nude photos of themselves bathing in a sink at the restaurant. Not only did the girls lose their job at KFC, but since the photos are all over the internet, they might find it difficult to be hired again.**
- **February 2009: A 15 year-old Pennsylvania girl faced child pornography charges after police say she sent nude pictures of herself over the internet.**
- **March 2009: An Ohio teen committed suicide after a nude photo she sent via text message to her boyfriend was forwarded to other students at her school, resulting in bullying, humiliation, and embarrassment.**

Potential Consequences for Sexting

The consequences for engaging in the risky behavior of sexting are not limited to social embarrassment. In North Carolina, and in other states, taking nude photos of oneself or forwarding on nude photos of a minor can constitute child pornography. This can lead to a felony conviction, and the possibility of having to register as a sex offender.

Additionally, college admissions offices and potential employers have become much more tech-savvy themselves, and are now investigating potential students or employees on social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace to check for inappropriate content.

Tips for Parents

- Talk to your kids about what they are doing in cyberspace.
- Know with whom your kids are communicating.
- Consider limitations on electronic communication. Contact your wireless provider for more information
- Be aware of what your teens are posting publicly.
- Set expectations and make sure you are clear about what you consider appropriate electronic behavior.
- If you suspect that your son or daughter has become a victim of bullying as the result of sexting or other unsafe tech-behavior, contact your child's teacher, a school counselor, or an administrator.

New Hanover County School Board Policies You Should Know

Policy 8307: Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying

Policy 8431: Use of Portable Electronic Devices by Students

For more information about these and other policies visit, www.nhcs.net/policies/policymanual