

Kids: Texting and Sexting

Any kid with a cell phone probably uses it to send and receive text messages and images. It's similar to using email or instant messaging and most of the same etiquette and safety rules apply.

- Texting (#texting)
- Sexting (#sexting)

Texting

If your kids are texting, encourage them to respect others. Texting shorthand can lead to misunderstandings. Tell them to think about how a text message might be read and understood before sending it. Also, encourage your kids to:

- ignore texts from people they don't know
- learn how to block numbers from their cell phone
- avoid posting their cell phone number online
- never provide financial information in response to a text

Sexting

Sending or forwarding sexually explicit photos, videos, or messages from a mobile phone is known as "sexting." Tell your kids not to do it. In addition to risking their reputation and their friendships, they could be breaking the law if they create, forward, or even save this kind of message. Teens may be less likely to make a bad choice if they know the consequences.

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Online and Texting Safety Tips for Kids and Parents

- **Do not** post personal information online (name, age, birth date, address, telephone number, or school name). This information can be used by others to find out where you and your family live.
- **Do not** post your picture or pictures of your family online – they can be copied or changed or used to find you.
- **Do not** send any inappropriate photo or message by email or text.
- **Do not** post your plans and activities in a chat room or on your personal website.
- **Do not** post entries that make it clear that no one is at your home.
- **Do not** communicate with someone who has made you uncomfortable or afraid. Tell your parents or a trusted adult if someone does.
- **Do not** join online groups or games without talking to your parents.
- **Do not** meet with someone you met online without first telling your parents or guardian.
- **Do not** post hurtful or inappropriate messages. If someone else posts hurtful or inappropriate messages -- do not respond, but do tell a teacher, parent or other adult.
- **Do not** click on any link that you do not know, and you are not sure is legitimate.
- **Do not** buy any "apps" or "in app" purchases without talking to your parents or guardian.
- **Do not** enable any location services without talking to your parents or guardian.
- **Do** remember that people can lie online and say they are something they are not. Someone who says they are a 12-year-old girl could really be an older man looking to harm you.
- **Do** save messages that upset you and show them to your parents.
- **Do** share your password with your parents.
- **Do** visit <http://www.netsmartz.org/> to learn more about Internet safety.
- **Do** teach your child not to post identifying information on the Internet.
- **Do** set a limit for how much time your child can spend online.
- **Do** keep the computer in a public room in the house. Do not have an Internet- connected computer in your child's bedroom.
- **Do** utilize parental controls provided by your Internet Service Provider and/or blocking software. (Contact your Internet ISP if you have questions).
- **Do** talk to your children about purchasing "in app" products.

- **Do** talk to your child about using any location services on their device.
- **Do** periodically review your child's computer, emails and messages. You should have all of your children's passwords.
- **Do** spend time with your child online. Have them show you their favorite online destinations. Get to know your child's online friends as you would their real-life friends. Learn to navigate the web.
- **Do** know who they text and email. Most providers have online ways to identify frequent contacts so you can see if someone new appears as a contact.
- **Do** monitor your child's access to the Internet and texting.
- **Do** talk to your child about the danger of Internet predators.
- **Do** watch for unexplained changes in your child's behavior.
- **Do NOT** hesitate to seek help from law enforcement if you think a predator may be targeting your child.

For more helpful Internet safety information, please visit <http://www.netsmartz.org/> . Netsmartz.org has age appropriate videos, activities, and information for students in elementary school, middle school, and high school.

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Yes No