

# SEXTING

'Sexting'<sup>1</sup> is a relatively new term for sending text messages or images of a sexual nature via cell phone. The practice has become particularly popular among teens and is causing controversy on school grounds throughout the U.S.<sup>2</sup>

## **FIVE THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE PRESSING "SEND"**<sup>3</sup>

### **Don't assume anything you send or post is going to remain private.**

Your messages and images will get passed around, even if you think they won't: 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.

### **There is no changing your mind in cyberspace—anything you send or post will never truly go away.**

Something that seems fun and flirty and is done on a whim will never really die. Potential employers, college recruiters, teachers, coaches, parents, friends, enemies, strangers and others may all be able to find your past posts, even after you delete them. And it is nearly impossible to control what other people are posting about you. 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.

### **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 (42% total, 47% of teens, 38% of 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 (22% total, 24% teens, 20% young adults) say "pressure from friends" is a reason guys send and post sexually suggestive messages and images.

### **Consider the recipient's reaction.**

Just because a message is meant to be fun doesn't mean the person who gets it will see it that way. Four in ten teen girls who have sent sexually suggestive content did so "as a joke" but many teen boys (29%) agree that girls who send such content are "expected to date or hook up in real life." It's easier to be more provocative or outgoing online, but whatever you write, post or send does contribute to the real life impression you're making.

### **Nothing is truly anonymous.**

Nearly one in five young people who send sexually suggestive messages and images, do so to people they only know online (18% total, 15% teens, 19% young adults). 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.

<sup>1</sup> From [www.mahalo.com/Sexting](http://www.mahalo.com/Sexting)

<sup>2</sup> From [www.mahalo.com/Sexting](http://www.mahalo.com/Sexting), South Town Star: 'Sexting' causing stir around nation

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech> Sex And Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults.

# SEXTING IS ILLEGAL IN VERMONT.

The legislature passed a new sexting law in 2009 pertaining to juveniles – here’s the link to the statute (13 VSA 2802b):

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=13&Chapter=063&Section=02802b>

It basically creates a new, lesser crime (actually a “juvenile delinquency”) that addresses juveniles who knowingly and voluntarily take pictures/videos of themselves and send them to another person. It also creates penalties for people who keep those images once they’re sent to them, with different penalties for minors and adults in possession of those images.

**FOR FULL TEXT OF LAW, SEE:**

The Vermont Statutes Online

**Title 13: Crimes and Criminal Procedure**

*Chapter 63: OBSCENITY*

**13 V.S.A. § 2802b. Minor electronically disseminating indecent material to another person**

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