Young people, technology and sexuality

This activity has been adapted from the activity Young people, ICT and sexuality.\(^1\)

**Suggested duration: 40-45 minutes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crossroads outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Critically analyse situations, attitudes and behaviours that influence health, safety and wellbeing in different contexts.</td>
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<td>2.2 Recognise and respond appropriately to situations which may be harmful to self and others.</td>
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<td>3.3 Evaluate how the varied influences on attitudes and values impact on behaviours.</td>
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<td>4.4 Analyse the positive and negative implications of technology on their personal identity, relationships with others and their health behaviours.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crossroads content</th>
<th>What do we want students to know, understand or be able to do?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal identity – Responding to others</strong></td>
<td>Understand the implications of sexting and the use of other technology on the health and wellbeing of young people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influences on identity</td>
<td>Explore, analyse and question what is an appropriate or inappropriate image to share with others via technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social and cultural norms</td>
<td>Increase awareness of the implications and consequences of using mobile technologies and online spaces as a forum for self-expression and sharing personal material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>– influence of norms on behaviour</td>
<td>Develop skills in becoming a critical consumer of images.</td>
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<td>• Positive and negative influences of technology and media</td>
<td>Develop positive decision making skills regarding the appropriate sharing of images.</td>
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<td>– digital footprint</td>
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<td>– body image</td>
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<td><strong>Relationships – Owning yourself</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing and maintaining respectful relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rights and responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>– rights and responsibilities in different relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships – Responding to others</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Influences on relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>– impact of sharing information with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>– being a positive influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valuing and advocating for rights of self and others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Participation and advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>– asserting a stance on a situation or decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>– upstander behaviour online and offline</td>
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</table>

\(^1\) Ollis, D, Harrison, L & Maharaj, C, 2013, *Sexuality Education Matters: Preparing pre-service teachers to teach sexuality education*, Deakin University, Burwood, Vi
### Sexuality and sexual health – Owning yourself

**Safe and ethical behaviour**
- Safe and ethical behaviour
  - consent

### Sexuality and sexual health – Responding to others

**Influences on behaviour**
- Influences on behaviour
  - personal values
  - social pressures
- Influences of technology and media on sexuality and sexual behaviour
  - standards of behaviour
  - sharing information and images
- Influences of the law on sexuality and sexual behaviour
  - confidentiality
  - consent
  - possession and distribution of explicit imagery

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**Teaching notes**

In a youth culture where exposure to sexual content, sending and received images through mobile phones and email, and posting images on social networking sites are thoroughly normalised, we need to engage young people in discussions about setting appropriate boundaries on the images that they take and that they choose to send on.\(^2\)

It is imperative to educate young people and increase awareness of the potential challenge they may face and the implications and consequences of using mobile technologies and online spaces as a forum for self-expression and sharing personal material. Young people need to become critical consumers of online material, to consider the material they see and whether it is appropriate to share with others or more appropriate and ethical to report to an authority.

Through this activity, students explore the appropriateness of materials and the role of technology as a medium for its distribution.

Content discussed in these activities may be confronting for some students. It is important to establish a safe and effective classroom environment, where ground rules are clearly communicated. It is essential that students are encouraged to listen to and respect the values, beliefs and opinions of others.

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**Required resources and materials for preparation**

- Texting or sexting cards – 1 set per pair or group of 4-5 students
- Real life scenario cards – 1 set per pair or group of 4-5 students

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\(^2\) Powell, A, 2010, Sex, Power and Consent: Youth culture and the unwritten rules, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne
Activity one – Sharing images, what is appropriate? (20 minutes)

- Create an imaginary line in the room to use as a continuum from least offensive to most offensive.

- Students work in pairs or small groups with a set of the sexting and texting cards. These cards describe a wide range of images/videos that may be shared via digital media (phone, email, instant messaging and apps, social networking).

- In pairs or small groups, students discuss each card and determine where they would place that image/video in relation to the continuum (most offensive to least offensive).
  - Students should consider the position of the card if the image/video was sent digitally.
  - Students will have differing opinions. For some students it may be offensive to send all of these images/videos using digital media.

- As a large group take some time to review the placement of cards from other groups.

- Facilitate a group discussion raising issues relating to culture, use of social media and sharing apps, public and private spaces, consent, consequences, risks, bullying.
  - Invite pairs/groups to nominate the placement of one or two cards. Encourage students to explain reasons for the placement and the discussion and thought process for the group when placing the cards.

- As a group discuss:
  - What card positions did the pairs/groups agree upon?
  - What card positions did the pairs/groups disagree on?
  - Was it easy for the pair/group to come to a shared position?
  - Did males and females have different ideas?
  - Were there any other factors that influenced where people wanted to place the cards, e.g. culture, values, family background, personal experiences?

Activity two – What’s the risk? (15 minutes)

- In small groups, students explore one of the real life scenarios.

- Within their group, students discuss and record:
  - What options does the young person have?
  - What factors are influencing this individual’s decision? Consider the internal and external pressures.
  - What are the risks or consequences of each option? Consider both the positive and negative consequences.

- As a whole group, invite each group to share their scenario and the discussions that took place in their group.

  Teacher notes have been provided to guide discussions for each scenario.
Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

• As a whole group, ask students to reflect on the following questions.
  o Is this type of technology use common among young people?
  o Are these scenarios reflective of what has happened among your friends or peer group?
  o Would any of these scenarios be considered illegal activities?
  o To what extent are young people aware of the laws around technology and sexual images?
  o What impact can inappropriate use of technology have on the wellbeing of the young people involved?
  o What are some strategies young people can use to protect themselves and others and ensure technology is used for appropriate and positive action?
Teacher fact sheet – Young people, technology and sexuality

Socially, the current generation of young people who has grown up in a world with constant access to mobile technology and online communications, has different ways of communicating from previous generations. With the increased availability of internet and mobile technologies, media users have progressed from passive viewers of media content to active contributors.

Mobile phone providers, social networking websites (e.g. Facebook), personal blog websites and video posting websites (e.g. YouTube) see young people aged 14-34 as the greatest proportion of this consumer market. Furthermore, the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) reports that use of information and communication technology (ICT) for social networking purposes far exceeds the hours spent on homework.

The internet, technology and media resources can be used to enhance young people’s social experiences and connections through safe and supportive environments. Online technology offers the potential to engage with young people who are hard-to-reach through more traditional forms of communication. Many young people feel more confident and empowered online, and are able to discuss sensitive topics such as mental health and sexual health, and receive immediate feedback.

Technology and ICT have become an important part of social life and a forum for the exploration and presentation of their identities including their sexual identity. Sexting can be generally described as “the practice of using a mobile phone to take and send nude (including semi-nude) photographs to other phones or Internet sites.”

The National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health 2013 found that nearly a third (31%) of students who are sexually active had used social media for sexual reasons. Just over one quarter had sent a sexually explicit photo of themself. While misuse of social media clearly has the potential for harm, it has been found that behaviours such as ‘sexting’ were largely an adult concept that young people did not feel adequately reflected their everyday experiences of creating and sharing digital images.

There are concerns that young people, particularly females, are increasingly expected to engage in creating and sharing semi-nude and nude images as part of healthy sexual

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3 Australian Communication and Media Authority. 2008. Internet use and social networking by young people, no. 1, September 2008, Media and Communications in Australian Families series
6 Albury, K., Crawford, K., Byron, P. and Mathews, B. (2013) Young people and sexting in Australia: ethics, representation and the law, ARC Centre for Creative Industries and Innovation/ Journalism and Media Research Centre, University of New South Wales, Australia.
relationships. When an image is shared, it has the risk of being circulated widely without consent. Sharing images through social media can place pressure on young people to fit a certain image, and open themselves up to be judged by others.

Critical literacy skills are increasingly important for young people to access, validate, synthesise and respond to information to make informed choices about their health, safety and wellbeing. Young people need to become critical consumers of images, to consider the images they see and whether they are appropriate to share with others or more appropriate and ethical to report the image to an authority. It is equally imperative to educate young people and increase awareness of the potential challenge they may face and the implications and consequences of using mobile technologies and online spaces as a forum for self-expression and sharing personal material.
### Texting or sexting cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A photo of a woman dressed in a burqa</th>
<th>A photo of a group of friends waterskiing at the dam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A private photo that a girl shared with her partner</td>
<td>A video of a group singing happy birthday to a friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>A video of someone being bullied</td>
<td>School photos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A photo of males getting changed at the local pool</td>
<td>A video of a couple kissing at a party without them knowing</td>
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<tr>
<td>A video of a boy in his underwear from the PE change rooms, taken without him knowing</td>
<td>A selfie of someone in their underwear found on a friend’s phone accidently</td>
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<tr>
<td>A photo up a skirt taken as a girl climbs some stairs</td>
<td>A photo of person in traditional ceremonial dress (e.g. body paint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A photo of a new student crying which has been shared around the school</td>
<td>A video of people competing at a swimming carnival</td>
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## Real life scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario One</th>
<th>Scenario Two</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My new boyfriend has asked me to send him a naked photo of myself. I really like him and he has promised he will not show it to anyone else. I think I trust him. Surely it can’t be that big a deal.</td>
<td>I am male and I am being bullied at school for not having sexual images of girlfriends on my mobile phone to share with my mates.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Scenario Three</th>
<th>Scenario Four</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One of the guys snuck into the girls change rooms, took a photo on his phone of them getting changed for PE and is sending it to all his mates.</td>
<td>One of my so-called friends took some private photos off my mobile phone and sent them around the playground. He says it’s my fault because I didn’t have a password on my phone.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Scenario Five</th>
<th>Scenario Six</th>
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<tr>
<td>Without my consent, somebody has posted a photo of me on Facebook in my swimmers. I am devastated, as people are now posting horrible comments about my appearance.</td>
<td>My best friend has told me she is planning to send a sexual image of herself to this boy at school she likes in the hope he may ask her out. She says everyone else is doing it, so what’s the big deal?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Real life scenarios – Teacher discussion information sheet
Source: Ollis, D, Harrison, L & Maharaj, C, 2013, Sexuality Education Matters: Preparing pre-service teachers to teach sexuality education, Deakin University, Burwood, Vi

Scenario One - Naked photo
My new boyfriend has asked me to send him a naked photo of myself. I really like him and he has promised he will not show it to anyone else. I think I trust him. Surely it can’t be that big a deal.

Risks or consequences discussion points
Your boyfriend may send it to other friends, who in turn may also forward it on.

This may lead to humiliation, embarrassment, bullying or harassment, all of which could lead to your self-harm.

It may have ramifications in the future if you begin to date someone else, or you join a new club/sports team, or if you are applying for a job at some stage.

Taking, sending or receiving sexual images of a minor is illegal. If you're found to have a naked or semi-naked photo of someone under 18 on your phone or your computer, you can be charged with a criminal offence. If you forward the photo to someone else you can be charged with a criminal offence even if you delete it from your own phone. You can be charged even if it is a photo of yourself and you agreed to the photo being sent.

Scenario Two - Refusing to engage in sexting
I am male and I am being bullied at school for not having sexual images of girlfriends on my mobile phone to share with my mates. They're calling me gay because I don’t engage in ‘sexting’ and sharing of such images.

Risks or consequences discussion points
Peer pressure can be extremely difficult to resist, however there are many other ways to be yourself, or express your masculinity if you choose to, without having to conform to this pressure. By standing up to them and continuing to refuse to conform you will in fact gain respect from your wider community in the long term although this is very difficult to know in the short term.

Your role as an active bystander in challenging these so-called social norms that promote and condone sexual violence against females is courageous and demonstrates the far greater values and ethics that society needs.
Scenario Three - Privacy
One of the guys snuck into the girls change rooms, took a photo on his phone of them getting changed for PE and is sending it to all his mates.

Risks or consequences discussion points
This is an invasion of privacy. No consent has been given to take the photo. Furthermore, taking, sending or receiving sexual images of a minor is illegal (see the first scenario).

Scenario Four - Privacy and security
One of my so-called friends took some private photos off my mobile phone and sent them around the playground. He says it is my fault because I didn’t have a password on my phone.

Risks or consequences discussion points
It is not your fault, your friend has invaded your privacy. No consent has been given. However, it is better if you have a password on your phone and this should not be shared with anyone.

Scenario One - Five
Without my consent, somebody has posted a photo of me on Facebook in my swimmers. I am devastated, as people are now posting horrible comments about my appearance.

Risks or consequences discussion points
If you know who it is, consider asking them to delete the photo from Facebook. If you think it is now out of your control, talk to a trusted adult or contact a Kids Helpline counsellor (1800 55 1800) to work out what you can do. Ensure you speak to a counsellor or trusted adult to help you deal appropriately with the situation.

Scenario Six - Peer pressure
My best friend has told me she is planning to send a sexual image of herself to this boy at school she likes in the hope he may ask her out. She says everyone else is doing it, so what’s the big deal?

Risks or consequences discussion points
You must be an ethical friend and alert her to the consequences of her actions. Your intervention may influence her into making a different decision, or a more informed one. As a community citizen we must encourage and model challenging or speaking out against social norms that may be related to gender violence against females. As an honest friend you should feel comfortable offering your advice.