SAFER **screens, stronger** CHOICES

Sexting & Online Grooming

Calm conversations. Clear boundaries. Practical help.



NO SHAME. NO BLAME. JUST SUPPORT.

A practical booklet for families with children and teenagers

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Safer screens, stronger families

Start calm.
Keep the door open.

Dear parent or carer,

Sexual messages, image-sharing pressure and online grooming can feel difficult to discuss. But avoiding the subject does not remove the risk. A short, calm conversation can make it much more likely that a young person asks for help early.

Your first promise

If something goes wrong online, you can tell me. I will listen first, help you get safe and we will work out the next step together.



TIP Choose the right moment

Talk alongside an everyday activity - in the car, on a walk or while cooking - so it feels less like an interrogation.

- Ask what young people their age are seeing online, rather than demanding a personal disclosure.
- Use neutral words: *"pressure"*, *"private images"*, *"unsafe contact"* and *"trusted adult"*.
- Listen without interrupting. Thank them for telling you, even if you feel shocked.
- Avoid threats to remove every device; fear of punishment can stop children seeking help.

TIP Try these conversation starters

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

If a friend was being pressured to send a picture, what advice would you give them?

WHO COULD HELP?

Which three adults could you contact if you felt worried, embarrassed or threatened?

Remember: responsibility always sits with the person applying pressure, manipulating, threatening or sharing without consent - never with the child who asks for help.

Understand the pressure

“Sexting” can mean sending, receiving or being asked for sexual messages, nude or semi-nude images or videos. Young people may call these “nudes”. Requests can come from a partner, friend, stranger or someone pretending to be another young person.



TIP Teach consent - online too

- **No one owes anyone a sexual image, even in a relationship.**
- **Consent must be freely given. Pressure, guilt, repeated asking, dares, threats or rewards are not consent.**
- **A person can change their mind at any time.**
- **Never forward, save or show someone else's intimate image.**

A useful rule

If a message makes you feel rushed, frightened, guilty or secretive: pause. Do not send. Speak to a trusted adult.

TIP Challenge common pressure lines

“IF YOU TRUST ME...”
Trust is shown by respecting a boundary, not by demanding proof.

“EVERYONE DOES IT...”
Popularity does not make something safe, respectful or right for you.

“EVERYONE DOES IT...”
Popularity does not make something safe, respectful or right for you.

“I'LL SHARE YOUR SECRET...”
Threatening or blackmailing someone is abuse. Do not pay or send more.

UK law protects children from sexual exploitation and the creation or sharing of sexual images of anyone under 18. The priority should be safeguarding and getting support, not shaming a young person.

Respond, don't react

If a young person tells you that an image has been requested, sent or shared, your response can shape whether they stay engaged with help.

Use the CALM response

1. *Connect: say,* ***"I'm glad you told me. This is not your fault."***
2. Assess safety: ask whether there are threats, blackmail, plans to meet, an adult involved or immediate danger.
3. Limit contact: stop replying; block the account after noting usernames and message details. Do not forward or make new copies of a sexual image.
4. Make reports: use the platform's reporting tools; use Childline's Report Remove if the young person is under 18; report online sexual abuse or grooming to CEOP.

Do not bargain with a blackmailer

Do not pay, send another image or agree to meet. Keep supportive contact with the young person and seek specialist help.

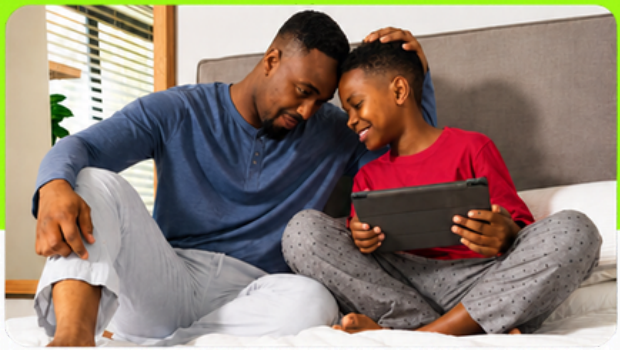
When to act urgently

- **Call 999 if anyone is in immediate danger or a meeting is about to happen.**
- **Contact police on 101 for a non-emergency crime concern.**
- **Make a CEOP report when you are worried about online sexual abuse, grooming or exploitative communication.**
- **If the image is of the young person and they are under 18, use Report Remove to seek removal.**

Preserve useful non Image information such as usernames, profile links, dates and what was said. Follow police or safeguarding advice about evidence; avoid downloading or circulating an intimate image.

Know how grooming can develop

Online grooming is when someone builds trust with a child or young person in order to manipulate, exploit or sexually abuse them. The person may be a stranger, someone known offline, or someone using a false identity. Contact can begin through social media, messaging, livestreams or games.



Challenge common pressure lines

ATTENTION
Lots of compliments, intense contact or acting like the only person who understands.

GIFTS & FAVOURS
Game credits, money, subscriptions or promises that create a sense of debt.

SECRECY
Moving to private chat, deleting messages or saying 'don't tell your parents'.

SEXUALISING
Turning conversations sexual, asking about bodies or requesting images.

ISOLATION
Criticising friends or family and making the young person depend on them.

CONTROL
Threats, blackmail, fake images, demands for more content or pressure to meet.

Important
Grooming can feel like friendship or romance to the young person. Stay curious and supportive; confrontation or blame may push the contact further underground.

Possible changes to explore

- Sudden secrecy, distress after going online or a big change in device use.
- Unexplained gifts or money; a much older "friend", new sexual language.
- Withdrawal, anxiety, sleep disruption, missing school or plans to meet someone unknown.

Reduce opportunity. Increase confidence.

Set up safety together

- **Keep accounts private where appropriate and review follower/friend lists.**
- **Limit who can message, tag, add to groups, duet, remix or see location.**
- **Turn off live location and avoid posting school, uniform, routine or home details.**
- **Use strong, unique passwords and two-step verification.**
- **Agree that online-only contacts do not become secret meetings. An adult should know, and any safe meeting must be public and supervised.**

The four-action plan

STOP replying >>
TELL a trusted adult >>
BLOCK the account >>
REPORT through the app and to CEOP when sexual abuse or grooming is involved.



Practise a refusal script

DIRECT	EXIT
"No. I don't send private pictures. Don't ask again."	"I'm leaving this chat now." Then block and tell an adult.

For parents and carers

- **Learn the games and apps your child uses - including private chat, disappearing messages and livestream features.**
- **Use parental controls as one layer, not a substitute for trust and conversation.**
- **Revist agreements so your child grows. Explain the reason for a boundary and invite their view.**





Safety tools reduce risk, but no setting can guarantee safety. A young person who knows they will be believed has a powerful route to help.

FAMILY CHALLENGE

The 7-day safety reset

Complete one small action each day. Keep it collaborative: adults should review their own settings and habits too.

DAY 1 TRUSTED TEAM

Write down three adults the young person could contact without fear of blame.

DAY 2 PRIVACY CHECK

Review one favourite app: messages, followers, tagging, location and visibility.

DAY 3 PRESSURE PRACTICE

Role-play one refusal and one help-seeking message.

DAY 4 CONTACT CLEAN-UP

Remove unknown followers, old group chats and contacts that feel uncomfortable.

DAY 5 REPORTING ROUTE

Find the block/report buttons and bookmark CEOP and Report Remove.

DAY 6 SCREEN-FREE CHECK-IN

Take 20 minutes together without devices. Ask what feels good and difficult online.

DAY 7 FAMILY AGREEMENT

Agree three boundaries and one promise: “You can always tell me; we will solve it together.”

Help is available

If something has happened, act calmly and seek support. A young person is never responsible for being groomed, exploited, threatened or having an image shared without consent.

CEOP Safety Centre - Report concerns about online sexual abuse, grooming or exploitative communication.
www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

Childline - Confidential support for under-19s, online or by phone: 0800 11111.
www.childline.org.uk

Report Remove - For under-18s in the UK to report sexual images or videos of themselves for removal.
www.childline.org.uk/report remove

NSPCC Helpline - Advice for adults worried about a child: 0808 800 5000.
www.nspcc.org.uk

Police - 999 for immediate danger; 101 for non-emergency concerns.
www.police.uk

We help families and communities build safer, healthier digital habits through workshops, school sessions, digital safety guidance and parent support.

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SOURCES & FURTHER READING

CEOP Education: **Online grooming**
Childline: **Sexting and nudes**
Report Remove
NSPCC: Grooming and online safety

Guidance checked September 2026. Services and contact details can change; verify online when needed.

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