



# Sextortion:



## What Parents Should Know

You've likely heard of sexting – sharing and receiving sexually explicit messages and nude or partially nude images by text or through an app. Though sexting can be part of normal adolescent sexual development, there are also risks, particularly **sextortion**.

**Sextortion:** A type of blackmail used by offenders to acquire additional sexual content from the child, coerce them into engaging in sexual activity, or to obtain money from the child.

### Who Are the Perpetrators?

Often, victims know their extorters. They are current or former romantic partners. They may hold an initial sexual image that was sent intentionally by the victim and are now using it to get more content; threatening to spread the picture to friends and family if the victim does not comply.



60%

of the time, the blackmailer is known to the victim.

Other times, the offender was met online. This could be a lone-actor or a coordinated group of extorters who work together to target and elicit explicit content from their victims. This type of extorter may request additional content (often of an increasingly explicit nature) or money.



## How Does it Happen?

Sextortion can happen at the hands of both **peers** and **unknown**, online offenders.

### When It's an **Unknown** Offender

#### Approach

Offenders often approach a child on social media after using it to learn about the child's interests, friends, school, family, etc.

#### Move platforms

It is common for offenders to make initial contact with a victim on one platform, then ask them to move to a second or third platform, usually those with encrypted messaging systems in order to make tracking their crime more difficult.

#### Coerce

This includes using tactics like:

- » Initially offering something of value such as money or drugs in exchange for a sexual image
- » Pretending to work for a modeling agency
- » Developing a false rapport with the child
- » Secretly recording explicit videos/ messages during chats
- » Threatening to physically assault the child or his/her family
- » Using multiple identities to contact the child
- » Pretending to be younger and/or a member of the opposite sex
- » Hacking accounts to steal sexual images, or
- » Threatening to commit suicide if no images are sent

**VS**

### When It's Someone **Known**

#### Acquire the Image

Often, the extorter is an ex-romantic partner who may have received the image deliberately from the victim while involved in a relationship.

#### Threaten

The extorter may use the threat of spreading the image to force the victim into staying in/ returning to the relationship after it has ended, or to acquire additional sexual content.

#### Persist

The harassment rarely stops if a victim complies with the extorter's demands.



## What Can I Do About It?

### Talk About Technology

Children should grow up expecting that their parents are a part of their digital lives. Regular check-ins about their online interactions should be the norm. Include children in setting rules and limits for their tech-time.

### Talk About Sexuality and Relationships

Talking about your family's expectations and values regarding sex and relationships is an important first step. These conversations should happen regularly. Be sure to discuss the characteristics of healthy relationships, such as having and respecting boundaries and practicing consent. Explain that both pressuring someone and being pressured into sexual behaviors that are uncomfortable or unsafe are NOT OK. Similarly, help children understand that they should never forward sexts they may receive from others. Limiting the image's spread reduces the risk of it falling into dangerous hands.



What do you think you'd do if you got forwarded a nude?

I'm not sure...

It's simple. Delete it.  
It wasn't intended for you.  
Don't share it.



**NetSmartz**

For more resources, visit [MissingKids.org/NetSmartz](https://MissingKids.org/NetSmartz)

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