

What is NetSmartz411?

NetSmartz411 is a premier, Internet safety helpdesk and hotline for answering your questions about Internet safety, computers, and the Web. Parents, guardians, grandparents, teachers – any concerned adults – are welcome to use NetSmartz411 to better understand the opportunities and challenges children face online.

At NetSmartz411.org you can find answers to all your questions about the online world. View the library for information about topics ranging from social networking, instant messaging, cell phones, chatrooms, e-mail, and gaming. You will learn the potential risks to children and how to help protect them while using certain websites or programs. New Internet safety issues are addressed as they emerge so you will have access to the most current information available to help you protect this highly connected generation of children and teens.

If you can't find what you are looking for, use the Ask an Expert tab or call 1-888-NETS411 (638-7411) to ask a new question.

Why come to us?

- We know where you're coming from. Sometimes adults feel like they don't know quite as much as their children do about the Internet. This site is your opportunity to learn more. Parents, guardians, grandparents, stepparents, teachers, and concerned friends are welcome to use NetSmartz411 to better understand the opportunities and challenges children face online.
- We are experts. Your questions will be answered by professionals who know a lot about Internet safety – the real-life analysts at the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. We handle daily reports about the online exploitation of children and know steps you can take to keep the children and teens in your life safer online.

NetSmartz411 is provided at no cost to the public by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. This service is made possible by generous donations from the Qwest Foundation. We look forward to reading your questions and comments about the site.

What is sexting? What do parents and teens need to know?

New Policy Statement from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

Alexandria, VA – September 21, 2009. Two years ago, the word “sexting” did not even exist in the English language. Today it is a term that is much discussed and debated by parents, students, educators, law enforcement leaders and policy makers across America. It is widely misunderstood.

“Sexting” refers to youth sending sexually explicit messages or sexually explicit photos of themselves or others to their peers. Today, many teens are using cell phones, computers, web cams, digital cameras, and/or certain video game systems to take and distribute sexually explicit photographs of themselves or others.

“Sexting” is a complex issue that covers a wide range of severity. NCMEC believes that the primary response to “sexting” must be positive, empowering educational messages directed to parents and teens. Parents must become more involved in their children’s lives, be more aware of what they are doing, and set limits. Teens must become better informed about the implications and repercussions of their acts.

NCMEC knows about “sexting” firsthand. NCMEC’s Child Victim Identification Program has reviewed and analyzed 27 million child pornography images and videos since 2003, 9 million in the past year alone. Of the children successfully identified and rescued, 10% of the images were self-produced. Another 14% were produced as a result of online enticement by another party who persuaded or extorted youth into taking and sending explicit photos.

On June 24, 2009, results were released from a survey by Cox Communications in partnership with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and John Walsh. Harris

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and TRU also conducted a study about teens and sexting.

One in 5 teens have engaged in sexting

71 percent of teen girls have sent or posted this content to a boyfriend or girlfriend

Over a third know of a friend who has sent or received a sext message

51 percent of teen girls say they do it because of pressure from a guy

One in 10 sexters has sent these messages to people he or she doesn't know

66 percent of teen girls and 60 percent of teen boys do it to be "fun or flirtatious"

Almost all teens surveyed think it's dangerous to sext, including those who engaged in it

44 percent of teen girls and boys say they did it in response to content they received

Half of teens think that adults overreact about sexting

44 percent of teen girls say it is common for these images to be shared with people not intended to see it

38 percent say that "exchanging sexually suggestive content makes dating or hooking up with others more likely"

29 percent of teens say that exchanging explicit content makes them feel "expected" to date or hook up

Online Grooming

Online grooming is a process. An individual, usually an adult, attempts to establish a relationship with a child or teen to gain the child's trust. The ultimate goal of the "groomer" is to arrange an in-person meeting to engage in sexual relations with the child or teen.

You should know:

- **It may involve deception.** Adults trying to groom children may initially lie about their age. They may never reveal their real age to the child, even after forming an established relationship.
- **The groomer may claim to have the same interests as the child.** Often, the groomer will know popular music artists, clothing trends, sports team information, or another activity or hobby the child may be interested in.
- **Frequently, a groomer will pretend to relate to the child.** This makes children believe that while no one else can understand them or their situation, the groomer does. After the child's trust develops, the groomer may use sexually explicit conversations to test boundaries.

Offenders will entice a child into a face-to-face meeting by

- exploiting a child's natural curiosity about sex
- lowering the child's inhibitions by gradually introducing explicit images and child pornography
- using his or her adult status to influence and control a child's behavior
- offering attention and affection
- manipulating a child's trust, emotions, and insecurities and affirming the child's feelings and choices
- sending gifts to a child
- flattering and complimenting the child excessively

Your child or a child you know may be the victim of online grooming if he/she

- Obsesses about being online and becomes angry when he or she can't get on the computer
- Minimizes the screen or turns off the computer when adults are nearby
- Receives a gift from someone, and will not tell who it is from
- Has a lot of incoming or outgoing phone calls to numbers that are not recognized by a parent or guardian
- Becomes withdrawn from family and friends

Also, watch for inappropriate images or websites on the computer. If you ever feel that your child is in immediate danger, contact your local law enforcement. If you suspect a child is being groomed by someone online, contact the CyberTipline at 1-800-843-5678 or CyberTipline.com.

Answers from Cell Phones/iPods

How can I protect my child when he or she uses a cell phone?

What parental controls are available for my child's cell phone?

What is the WhosHere app on the iPhone?

How do I use Verizon parental controls for cell phones?

How do I use AT&T parental controls for cell phones?

How can I enable parental controls on the iPhone?

What is Swaggle for the iPhone?

What is MobileMe for the iPhone?

What is Crush or Flush?

What parental controls does T-Mobile offer for cell phones?

What is the Buddy Beacon application for cell phones?

What is FlyChat for the iPhone?

How do I use parental controls in iTunes?

What parental controls are available for Sprint cell phones?

Are parental controls available for the iPod Touch?

What parental controls are available from Vodaphone?

How can I block texts and incoming calls on a Verizon cell phone?