Sexting

Older children

Sexting refers to the sending of sexual messages, photos or videos using a mobile phone. It can also refer to posting this type of material online. If children have a mobile phone camera or access to a web cam, it may be useful to establish rules about how they use them. The following tips will help older children manage their use of mobile phones, images and messages.

- Talk to your child about the kinds of things it is okay to photograph and share, and the things that should not be photographed or shared with others. The rules you make will depend on the age of your child and your family's personal standards and expectations.

- Talk with your child about their experiences with their mobile phone. Let them know it's okay to tell you if they come across something that worries or upsets them.

- Encourage them to tell you if anyone asks them to share images of themselves that make them feel uncomfortable.

- Teach your child that there are ways they can deal with disturbing material—they should not respond if they receive something inappropriate, close the computer window or mobile phone image or cancel the phone call.

- Talk to children about the importance of seeking permission from others before taking and sharing their photo.

- Depending on the maturity of your child you may like to inform them that they may be breaking the law if they send or forward on naked or sexy photos of themselves or others who are under 18.

- If your child is exposed to inappropriate content or has involved in a sexting incident talk with them about it. If necessary seek professional support, including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx. The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. Your child's school may also be able to provide guidance and support.

- If you are concerned that a sexting incident may be a criminal matter, contact your local police.

More information

The Cybersmart program provides a range of cybersafety materials for parents and their children. For more information, resources, advice and tips, visit the Cybersmart website at www.cybersmart.gov.au. Encourage your children and teens to take a look around the website. If you have young children, you may like to explore it together to help them understand how to protect themselves against online risks and make the most of their experiences online.