

GRADE 8

Sexting and Relationships

What are the risks and potential consequences of sexting?



RELATIONSHIPS & COMMUNICATION

We know the power
of words & actions.

OVERVIEW

It's natural for teens to be curious about their emerging sexuality. But most middle-schoolers aren't prepared for the risks of exploring this in the digital age. Help students think critically about self-disclosure in relationships and practice how they'd respond to a situation where sexting -- or a request for sexting -- might happen.

Students will be able to:

- Compare the risks and benefits of self-disclosure in relationships.
- Identify the risks and potential consequences of sexting.
- Practice applying strategies to respond to situations where sexting could occur.

Lesson Snapshot

Estimated time: 55 mins.

Warm Up:	Self-Disclosure	20 mins.
Read:	Late-Night Texting	20 mins.
Decide:	Real-Life Responses	10 mins.
Wrap Up:	Now and Future	5 mins.

Key Standards Supported

Common Core ELA

L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.2c, L.8.3, L.8.4, L.8.6, RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.4, RI.8.10, SL.8.1, SL.8.1a, SL.8.1b, SL.8.1c, SL.8.1d, SL.8.2, SL.8.3, SL.8.4, SL.8.6, W.8.4, W.8.10

CASEL

1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f

AASL

I.A.1, I.A.2, I.B.1, I.B.2, I.B.3, I.C.1, I.D.1, I.D.2, I.D.3, I.D.4, II.A.1, II.A.2, II.B.1, II.B.2, II.B.3, II.C.1, II.C.2, II.D.1, II.D.2, II.D.3, III.A.1, III.A.2, III.B.1, III.B.2, III.C.1, III.C.2, III.D.1, III.D.2, IV.B.2, IV.B.

ISTE

2a, 2b, 2d

What You'll Need

Spanish-language student and family resources available soon!

- **Lesson Slides**
- Video: Teen Voices: Sexting, Relationships, and Risks **Watch**
- Student Handout: Late Night Texting **Student Version Teacher Version**
- Lesson Quiz **Editable Google form Answer Key**

Take-home resources

- **Family Tips**
- **Family Activity**
- **Family Engagement Resources**

LESSON PLAN

Key Vocabulary:

red flag feeling

when something happens on digital media that makes you feel uncomfortable, worried, sad, or anxious

self-disclosure

sharing private or personal thoughts and feelings with someone

sexting

digital sharing of intimate images or video with another person

Warm Up: Self-Disclosure

20 mins.

Before the lesson: This lesson deals with sexting, a sensitive topic that can be difficult for both teachers and students to discuss. You may need to make modifications depending on your classroom. For example, you might teach this lesson separately to boys and girls. Or you might have students work individually rather than in groups. Or you might invite volunteers to share out rather than calling on students.

We also suggest that before or after the lesson, distribute the **Sexting Handbook** to students. This resource is designed for students, though teachers will find it helpful in preparation for this lesson. For teachers, we also recommend **Teen Sexting: A Brief Guide for Educators and Parents** by the Cyberbullying Research Center.

1. Ask: *Can you remember a time when you shared a secret or something really personal with someone else?*

Have students think to themselves and invite them to share out. Emphasize that they don't need to say what or with whom they shared but just what the experience was like and how it made them feel.

2. Explain that *sharing private or personal thoughts and feelings with someone* is called **self-disclosure**. **(Slide 4)** Self-disclosure can bring people closer together, but it also can be risky.

3. Explain that one common type of self-disclosure is **sexting**, which is defined as *digital sharing of intimate images or videos with another person*. **(Slide 5)** Sexting is a very private type of self-disclosure. Tell students that you will watch a short video about the topic and then have a discussion.

Explain to students that this is a very sensitive topic and that it's important that they be their most mature selves when discussing it. Review the existing discussion norms for the class or consider presenting one or more of the following norms:

1. Speak your truth.
2. Respect others' viewpoints.
3. Don't interrupt.
4. Assume positive intent.
5. Disagree respectfully.

Provide examples and clarify any questions students have about the norms.

4. Project Slide 6 and ask students to consider the two discussion questions as they watch the **Teen Voices: Sexting, Relationships, and Risks** video. After watching the video, invite students to share their responses to the discussion questions.

5. Summarize some of the key reasons and risks related to sexting, including:

Reasons:

- To get someone to like you
- To show off your confidence
- Peer pressure

Risks

- It could be shared with people you don't want to see it, like family, people you don't know, or friends.
- Your relationship with the person could change, but the image doesn't go away, and you might regret having sent it.

Explain to students that in the next activity, they will be looking at and analyzing a specific scenario involving sexting.

Read: Late-Night Texting

20 mins.

1. Distribute the **Late-Night Texting Student Handout** and have students read Part 1 silently, or read it aloud to the class. Ask: *What are your thoughts about this situation? Is what Tyler texted OK?*

Have students share their ideas with a partner and then invite students to share out with the class. Students may say it's not OK *because Tyler is pressuring Alyssa or because he's being peer-pressured by his older brother*.

2. Ask: *Does Alyssa seem comfortable with what Tyler is asking her? How do you know?*

Students should identify that Alyssa doesn't feel comfortable and that she shows this by saying "ummm" and "I don't know about that." Have students circle or highlight the lines on their handouts.

3. Explain that this is an example of a **red flag feeling**. A red flag feeling is when *something happens online or with a device, and it causes you to feel uncomfortable, worried, sad, or anxious*. **(Slide 7)** It is a warning sign that something might be off.

Project **Slide 8** and explain that when you have a red flag feeling, it's important to slow down, pause, and think about the situation. Students can use F.I.R.E. to help them think through the red flag feeling. Have students read aloud the questions associated with each step.

4. **Have** students work in groups to discuss and complete Part 2 of the handout.

Invite students to share out answers from Part 2. Use the **Teacher Version** to support discussion. Emphasize the possible unintended consequences if Alyssa decides to sext:

- **Social networks and apps make publishing and sharing quick and easy.** It's hard to know where the image will go, who might receive it, and who could repost it.
- **A sext can leave your social circle very quickly and spread to a large public audience.** Once you press send, that picture is out of your control forever. You have no control over what others may think and how they might re-share that image with others.
- **Even if you trust someone, you never know.** People change, get in fights, and break up. If someone is angry with you, they might try to get revenge by sharing something personal about you to embarrass or humiliate you.
- **Sexting by minors (kids under 18) is illegal in some states.** (See **Sexting Laws Across America** by the Cyberbullying Research Center.)

Note to teachers: This activity analyzes sexting solely from the perspective of the recipient, Alyssa. If time allows, we recommend extending the lesson to have students more explicitly consider Tyler's perspective. Reflection questions could include:

- *The scenario mentions that Tyler's older brother suggested he "take it to the next level." How might that have influenced Tyler's actions?*
- *Besides not asking in the first place, what could Tyler have done differently to avoid giving Alyssa a red flag feeling?*

Decide: **Real-Life Responses**

10 mins.

1. **Have** students return to the **Late-Night Texting Student Handout** and complete Part 3.
2. **Invite** students to share out responses. Capture student ideas on **Slide 9**. Support student ideas with specific strategies from the **Teacher Version**, including: *Use humor, keep it light, be frank, change the subject, don't fall for trading*, or others that students come up with.
3. **Project Slide 10** and explain that when it comes to self-disclosure and sexting, it is never OK to:
 - **Pressure someone** into doing something they're not comfortable with, like sexting.
 - **Share or forward a sext** that someone has sent to you, whether you wanted it sent to you or not. Your actions could embarrass and humiliate someone and devastate their life. If you are being harassed, being pressured, or receiving unwanted messages from someone else, block that person and tell a trusted adult.

Wrap Up: **Now and Future**

5 mins.

1. **Prompt** students to answer a "now and future" question, either on paper or digitally: *What takeaways from this lesson are important for me to know now? Three years from now?* (**Slide 11**)
2. **Have** students complete the **Lesson Quiz**. Send home the **Family Activity** and **Family Tips**.



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