

# Digital Consent

A lesson plan from Healthy Connections: A Harborview Abuse & Trauma Center Sexual Health Education Curriculum for high school students

**Grade:** 10-12

**Time:** 50 minutes

## Materials Needed:

- Computer/projector to display PowerPoint
- Digital Consent Activity Sheet (printed)
- Digital Consent Activity Key (printed)
- Digital Consent: Sexting. A Resource For Young People handout (either printed or digital version)

## Washington State Health Standards:

Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.

- Examine laws and consequences related to sexual offenses, including when a minor is involved. **H1.Se6.HSa**
- Identify laws and concerns related to sending or posting sexually explicit pictures or messages. **H1.Se6.HSb**
- Understand importance of personal and social responsibility for sexual decisions. **H7.Se6.HS**

## OVERVIEW

Students will learn how to implement consent into their interactions online. Students will participate in a group activity where they will determine whether the characters in a scenario asked for digital consent or not.

## OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Know the definition of digital consent
- Understand how to ask for digital consent
- Develop a better understanding of Washington State sexting laws

## TEACHER PREPARATION

- Print copies of Digital Consent Activity Sheet (one or two for each group)
- Print one copy of Digital Consent Activity Key
- Review RCW [9.68A.053](#)
- Review RCW [9A.86.010](#)

## A NOTE ON INCLUSIVITY

This curriculum is inclusive of all gender identities and expressions. You are encouraged to use gender-neutral language when presenting this lesson. That means, using “they/them” pronouns rather than “he/him” or “she/her” pronouns, unless otherwise specified.

When talking about romantic relationships, do not assume heterosexuality. This curriculum is inclusive of all sexual orientations. Do not always assume abusers are male-identified, and do not always assume survivors of abuse are female-identified.

Please keep in mind that people of any race, gender, sexual orientation or ability can experience abuse.

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## AGENDA

### Introduction - 5 minutes

**Slide 1:** *Hello everyone, welcome to today's presentation on digital consent. [Introduce self if needed]*

*Before we get started I do want to mention that this lesson will discuss topics such as online abuse, sexual harassment, and other related issues. Please take care of yourselves as needed. If you need to take a break, that is totally okay. You can participate as much or as little in this lesson as you'd like.*

**Slide 2:** *Before we get started, here are some gentle reminders as we go through the presentation. First, everyone should be respectful of others. That means try not to speak over each other and instead speak one at a time. Second, be mindful of what you share. I am what's called a mandated reporter. Does anyone know what that means? [Pause for responses]. A mandated reporter is someone who cares about the safety of students and has a legal obligation to report if a student has been assaulted or abused to the police or Child Protective Services. Please keep that in mind as we go through the lesson. If anyone wants to report anything, find a mandated reporter you trust, so a teacher, coach, or counselor, and they will help you. Lastly, no shaming others. Everyone should feel safe here. Let's get started!*

**Slide 3:** *This is today's agenda. We'll start with definitions, then talk about ways we can practice digital consent, then go over sexting laws in Washington State, and end with an activity.*

### Discussion - 20 minutes

**Slide 4:** *Is anyone willing to share what they think digital consent is? [Pause for response]*

[Instruction: Lead into next slide]

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**Slide 5:** *A lot of you had good ideas of what digital consent is. To clarify, digital consent is no different from regular consent. Regular consent involves asking someone for permission before doing something, then respecting their answer. Digital consent is the exact same thing, but in online spaces.*

*When asking for consent in-person, you might say, "Is it okay if I borrow your jacket?" and wait for the other person to respond. When asking for consent online, you might say, "is it okay if I post this photo of us?" and then wait for the answer.*

**Slide 6:** *A lot of what we share online has to do with our personal values. Some people have public social media accounts and some people have private social media accounts. Some people post online regularly, and some people rarely post anything. Some people post photos and videos of people without getting permission, and some people always ask before posting a photo of someone else. Some people like to share their location with others, and some people like to keep their location private.*

*Regardless of how we choose to be online, we always have to make sure we're practicing consent. Because everyone is online in different ways, we can't assume that people have the same values that we do.*

**Slide 7:** *There are some common ways to practice consent in online spaces.*

*One common practice is asking permission before posting a photo or video of someone else on social media. People should be able to dictate what photos of them exist online.*

*Secondly, checking if it's okay before sharing information outside of a one-on-one chat. Avoid posting screenshots of a personal conversation online without asking permission first.*

*Third, respecting the device and accounts of others. This could include not going through someone else's phone or laptop without getting permission, or getting into someone's social media accounts and going through their messages. Everyone should be able to have digital privacy.*

*Lastly, asking before starting a heavy conversation via phone/text. Not everyone has time or energy to talk about certain topics in the moment. It's important to ask first before unloading emotionally taxing information onto another person. Can anyone think of other ways to practice consent online? [Pause for response]*

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**Slide 8:** *Raise your hand if a friend or family member has posted an embarrassing photo of you online.*

*What did you do about it? How do you wish the person handled it?* [Pause for responses - debrief with students]

*Most people have an embarrassing photo of themselves online. Before you post photos of other people, think about how you felt when someone else posted a photo of you that you didn't like.*

**Slide 9:** *Now let's discuss digital consent red flags in romantic or intimate relationships. A lot of what we'll discuss can also apply to friendships as well.*

*It's not okay for someone to demand that their partner shares their location with them. Tracking people has led to little privacy and trust. It should be a joint decision to share locations with others, not a demand.*

*Someone going through their partner's phone without consent is another red flag. A lot of people go through their partner's phone because they're suspicious about something. If someone feels the need to go through their partner's phone, then there probably isn't any trust in that relationship.*

*Also, someone controlling what their partner posts online is another red flag. Someone shouldn't be controlling what their partner does, regardless of if it's online or in real life.*

*Someone demanding to have their partner's passwords to their accounts is another red flag. Someone should only share passwords if they want to, not because they feel they have to. However, it's usually best to not share account passwords with anyone.*

*Besides the occasional emergency, it's not okay for someone to text or call their partner repeatedly. This could be considered harassment, even if you're in a committed relationship. No one should have 24/7 access to another person.*

*Lastly, someone asking their partner for nude photos, or sending nude photos of themselves to their partner is not okay. There are also legal consequences for this. We will discuss this more in a few slides.*

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**Slide 10:** *Now let's go over the green flags. It's a good sign when someone respects their partner's boundaries online. That could look like someone asking before posting a photo of their partner, or not repeatedly texting their partner when they know they're busy.*

*Another green flag is someone respecting their partner's digital privacy. Can someone share what they think this means? [Pause for response] This could include avoiding going through someone's phone without permission, or policing someone's online habits.*

*Lastly, someone keeping their private conversations with their partner private is another green flag. No one should be having public fights on social media.*

**Slide 11:** *Let's talk about dating apps. Dating apps are a totally normal way for people to meet potential partners. However, they are designed for adults. Someone has to be 18 years old or older to be on a dating app. Some people under 18 lie about their age and say they're older than they are. Some adults also lie about their age and say they're younger than they are. This can be dangerous because some adults could be using dating apps to abuse young people. As a reminder, the age of consent in Washington State is 16 years old.*

*Catfishing is another potential risk to online dating. Is someone willing to share what they think catfishing is? [Pause for response] Catfishing is when someone tries to date someone online by pretending to be someone else. People who catfish often use a different name and someone else's pictures online. It is not okay for someone to pretend to be someone else online to get people to date them. However, catfishing happens often so it's something people should be aware of.*

*If people choose to be on dating apps as adults, they still need to make sure they are including consent in their interactions. Just because someone is on a dating app doesn't mean consent is implied. Consent must be asked every time.*

*Any questions about dating apps before we move on? [Pause for responses]*

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**Slide 12:** *People might be interacting with strangers online outside of dating apps. Some people might participate in online gaming, or be in online groups with people with a shared interest or identity.*

*If someone has online friends, there are important reminders before meeting with them in person.*

*Like I mentioned earlier, sometimes people lie about their identities online. So, it's better to be safe than sorry. If someone meets an online friend in person, they should make sure to meet in a public place rather than at someone's home. They should also let someone else know where they're going to be, or even bring a friend to the meeting spot.*

*If teens are making friends online, it's also important to make sure the friends are teens as well. Adults making friends with teens in online spaces is a major red flag. This could be a sign of grooming behavior, which is when an adult builds a relationship with a young person in order to manipulate them later. Grooming happens in online spaces often, and is never the fault of the teen or young person.*

**Slide 13:** *Now let's talk about sexting. There are sexting laws in Washington State not only for adults, but for young people too. It's important to know the possible consequences of sexting.*

*Can anyone tell me what sexting is? [Pause for response - lead into next slide]*

**Slide 14:** *Sexting is defined as sexually suggestive depictions (texts, images, or videos) sent electronically. Sexting is often referred to as "sending nudes."*

*Sexting between consenting adults is legal, as long as the images are of adults.*

*In Washington State, it is illegal for someone under the age of 18 to sext. That includes sending, possessing, or forwarding nude depictions of anyone under 18. This includes someone under 18 taking a nude photo of themselves. The legal consequences of sexting when under 18 depends on the specific circumstances, like the ages of the people involved.*

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**Slide 14 (continued):** *If anyone over 18 wants to engage in sexting, that is their choice. Sexting can be a way for people to explore their sexuality without the risk of pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections. But people still always have to ask for consent before sending a nude photo of themselves. An adult sending another adult an unsolicited nude photo is considered sexual harassment, and there are legal consequences to that as well.*

*For more information about sexting laws in Washington State, please refer to the handout: "Digital Consent: Sexting. A Resource for Young People."*

*Are there any questions about sexting laws before we move on? [Pause for response]*

**Slide 15:** *Nonconsensual porn (also referred to as "revenge porn" or "nonconsensual intimate image abuse") is the act of disclosing intimate images without the consent of the person who appears in the images. So, if someone sends their partner a nude photo, and the partner shares the photo with their friends or posts the photo online without getting permission, that is considered nonconsensual porn. Nonconsensual porn is illegal in Washington State.*

*Digital sextortion is when someone threatens to post or send a nude photo or video of someone unless they do something.*

*Nonconsensual porn and digital sextortion are other possible consequences of sexting, regardless of the ages of the people involved. However, if someone is the victim of nonconsensual porn or digital sextortion, it is not their fault. It is the fault of the person sharing or threatening to share the person's private images.*

**Slide 16:** *To wrap up, digital consent is important because it shows other people we respect them.*

*It's also important to remember everything we post online is in our digital footprint forever, even if we have private accounts or delete the post later. So, it's important that we think before we share or post online.*

*If we don't want something traced back to us, then we probably shouldn't post it.*



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### Activity - 23 minutes

**Slide 17:** *Now we're going to do an activity!*

*Please divide into 5 groups. I'm going to pass out a sheet with 5 different scenarios. Each group will work on one scenario for 5-7 minutes, then we'll share out in the larger group.*

[Instructions]

1. Divide the class into 5 groups
2. Assign each group a number from 1-5 (the number will correspond with the scenario the group will work on)
3. Pass out the activity sheets (1-2 per group depending on the size of the group)
4. Give the groups 5-7 minutes to determine if their scenario is an example of digital consent or not
5. After the 5-7 minutes, ask someone from each group to read out their scenario. Then ask the group what their response was to the scenario
6. Once the group has finished sharing what they responded to the scenario, ask if anyone else in the class wanted to add anything
  - a. i.e. "What do others think of their response?"
7. Provide the class with the preferred response listed in the key
8. Repeat actions 5-7 until each group has shared

### Conclusion - 2 minutes

**Slide 18:** *Thank you for participating in today's lesson. Does anyone have any last-minute questions related to digital consent?* [Pause for responses]

**Slide 19:** [Sources - may share with students if needed]

## HANDOUTS

- Digital Consent Activity Sheet
- Digital Consent: Sexting. A Resource For Young People



# Activity for Digital Consent Lesson

Instructions: With your group, determine if one of the following scenarios is an example of digital consent or not. Write what you think the characters could do differently. Your instructor will let you know which scenario your group is doing. Once finished, be prepared to share your responses with the larger group and explain your reasoning.

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1. Amir and Naya have been dating for a couple weeks. After one of their dates, Amir sent Naya an unsolicited nude photo of himself. Naya deleted the photo and asked Amir not to do it again, but the next day he sent another photo and asked Naya to send one as well.

**Was there digital consent? What could Amir or Naya have done differently?**

2. Evelyn and Adriana have been friends for years. Adriana took an unflattering photo of Evelyn and posted it online. Evelyn saw the photo on her feed and texted Adriana to take it down. Adriana took the photo down and apologized for posting it.

**Was there digital consent? What could Evelyn or Adriana have done differently?**

3. Caleb and Eric just started dating. Caleb noticed that Eric received a lot of texts while they were together, and he started to get suspicious. After Eric left the room, Caleb went through Eric's phone to check his texts.

**Was there digital consent? What could Caleb or Eric have done differently?**

4. Isabel texted her friend Ember to ask if they had time to talk about something that Isabel was having a hard time with. Ember said they didn't have time to get into a heavy conversation at the moment, but they could reserve some time tomorrow.

**Was there digital consent? What could Isabel or Ember have done differently?**

5. Leilani recently got into her top pick college. She shared the news with the family, and everyone was so proud. Leilani's mom posted online that Leilani got accepted into college, without asking Leilani first.

**Was there digital consent? What could Leilani or her mom have done differently?**

## Key for Digital Consent Lesson Activity

1. Amir and Naya have been dating for a couple weeks. After one of their dates, Amir sent Naya an unsolicited nude photo of himself. Naya deleted the photo and asked Amir not to do it again, but the next day he sent another photo and asked Naya to send one as well.

**Was there digital consent? What could Amir or Naya have done differently?**

**Preferred response:** There was no digital consent. Amir should not have sent a nude photo of himself without getting permission because that is sexual harassment. Amir also should not have asked for Naya to send a photo of herself, especially if she is under 18.

2. Evelyn and Adriana have been friends for years. Adriana took an unflattering photo of Evelyn and posted it online. Evelyn saw the photo on her feed and texted Adriana to take it down. Adriana took the photo down and apologized for posting it.

**Was there digital consent? What could Evelyn or Adriana have done differently?**

**Preferred response:** There was no digital consent; Adriana should have asked Evelyn if she could post the photo of her before posting it. However, Adriana was respectful by taking the photo down.

3. Caleb and Eric just started dating. Caleb noticed that Eric received a lot of texts while they were together, and he started to get suspicious. After Eric left the room, Caleb went through Eric's phone to check his texts.

**Was there digital consent? What could Caleb or Eric have done differently?**

**Preferred response:** There was no digital consent. Caleb should not go through Eric's phone without getting permission. Instead, Caleb should ask Eric who is texting him.

4. Isabel texted her friend Ember to ask if they had time to talk about something that Isabel was having a hard time with. Ember said they didn't have time to get into a heavy conversation at the moment, but they could reserve some time tomorrow.

**Was there digital consent? What could Isabel or Ember have done differently?**

**Preferred response:** There was digital consent. Isabel asked Ember for consent and Ember established a clear boundary.

5. Leilani recently got into her top pick college. She shared the news with the family, and everyone was so proud. Leilani's mom posted online that Leilani got accepted into college, without asking Leilani first.

**Was there digital consent? What could Leilani or her mom have done differently?**

**Preferred response:** There was no digital consent. It is clear Leilani's mom is proud and wants to share happy news, but it was not her news to share. Leilani's mom should've asked first before sharing Leilani's news online.