

Cell Phone Safety

Ten Tips for Teens



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Cell phones are wonderful tools that enable us to do amazing things every day. Here's how to make sure yours doesn't lead to major life problems.

1. Keep your cell phone keypad locked (and the PIN or passcode safe and private), so that others can't grab it, unlock it, and use it to get you into trouble when you're not looking.

2. Do not take any cell phone pictures or video that are sexual in nature. First off, if they involve nudity or even partial nudity, they are illegal and classified as child pornography - a felony offense in all states. The intent of the parties does not matter, nor does whether permission was granted. Second, they have the tendency to get into the hands of the wrong people. Think about your reputation.



3. Remember that having a cell phone is a privilege and not a right. Treat it as such. Appreciate that your parents have allowed you to have one (and often purchased it for you), and you'll earn more of their respect. Many youth have sabotaged their future (e.g., admission into college, scholarships, job opportunities, legal problems and costs, criminal prosecution, being placed on sex offender registries) because they have misused electronic devices and social media. It is NOT worth it.

4. Do not send texts or capture pictures or video on your phone that you wouldn't feel comfortable sharing with your parents.

5. Remember that all of the text, photos, and videos you create with your phone are often saved and retrievable as digital evidence (even years later). They are sometimes stored on the servers of your cell phone provider, in your phone's Cloud account, or on the flash memory or SIM card of your phone (or any other phone which has sent or received them) - even if you have deleted them.

6. Schools can take your cell phone when they have reasonable suspicion that it has been involved in a violation of school policy or the law. Request that your parent be present when you give it to them.



7. Never text and drive. No text is worth losing your life over, or taking someone else's. If something is urgent, pull the vehicle over to a safe place before dealing with it.

8. Only give out your phone number to people you know for sure you can trust.

9. Ask yourself how you'd feel if the text you sent or the picture or video you captured were broadcast all across the school, and all across the Internet. Even if you personally don't send it around, others can and often do.



10. Don't respond to texts from numbers and people you don't know. Learn how you can block certain individuals (via their cell phone numbers) from contacting you. Don't subject yourself unnecessarily to people who are mean or immature when you can easily keep them from sending you any messages.

Sexting: Advice for Teens

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Sharing pictures with romantic partners is a natural part of any relationship. It's important, however, that you are doing so safely, responsibly, and appropriately. Exchanging explicit (nude) images is not only uncool, it's illegal. It can get you in trouble with your parents, your school, and even the police. Think twice before taking an explicit picture of yourself, or sending one of yourself—or someone else—to another person. You never know where it could end up or what kind of trouble you could find yourself in. Follow these basic principles to keep your privates private.

1. Delete any explicit images sent to you. Even having these images on your phone could land you in a heap of trouble.

2. Do not distribute explicit images. If someone sends you an explicit image of themselves or someone else, do not pass it on to anyone else. Try to think about how you would feel if someone sent similar pictures of you to someone else that you didn't know or wouldn't want to see.

3. Ignore or flat-out reject any requests from others for inappropriate images. It is just not worth it, no matter how much you like the other person—even if you think you can trust them. The potential risk is just too high. If they really care about you, they will understand.

4. Block individuals who make you uncomfortable with how they talk to you (or what they send to you).

5. Distract the person requesting inappropriate pictures from you. Engage them in conversation about something else, or direct them to a cool YouTube video you just saw, or an app you think they would like. If they continue to ask about the pics, let them know that they should just chill out.

6. Don't support your own objectification. You are not a piece of meat. You don't want people to like you because of your body, but because of your mind and heart. Giving in and sending explicit images just feeds their appetite for more, and continues to devalue your worth.

7. Sexting doesn't define a healthy, functional romantic relationship. Sure, it's fun, flirtatious, and

risqué, but remember that these images could be seen by a wider audience (including your parents, teachers, or the police).

8. Send images that are *suggestive*, but not *explicit*. Keep private parts covered at all times. It's fine to send your partner a picture, just make sure it's PG-13 and not X-rated. Even so, realize that these too may be broadcast to others. If you wouldn't be concerned if your whole school (or grandma!) saw it, it's probably ok.



9. If you receive (or someone shows you) an explicit image of someone you know, contact that person to tell them that their images are being circulated. You would want someone to tell you if an image of yours like that was going around.

10. Inform an adult you trust if you are concerned about the well-being of the person in the image. If you are worried about the person who is in the picture, whether they are a friend or not, you may need to get help from an adult.