

What does the Law say?

Legal

Illegal

Having a sexually explicit image / video of someone under 18 on your phone.

Sharing / forwarding a sexually explicit image of someone under 18.

Consequences.

So what does the law say?

Taking, possessing or sharing a sexually explicit picture or video of someone under 18 is against the law. It does not matter if they gave you permission, someone else sent it to you, you have never met them before, you are under 18 too or it is a selfie. The police could investigate you and anyone else involved, and this could even affect your future education and employment.

If you are over 18 and you send an image of yourself to someone who is also over 18, this is not a crime. However, you should consider the other consequences of sending and sharing images.

'Once it's gone, it's gone'.

When you share a picture or video online or on your phone, you lose control of it. Pictures share quickly over the internet and whoever has it can send it to anyone. Think how you would feel if your nude selfie shown to your friends, family or teachers; or if you were involved in forwarding a 'sext' of someone under 18 that results in a police investigation.

Feeling pressured to send pics could affect your confidence.

If someone is pressuring you to send a nude pic, this is wrong. It is a form of abuse and can damage your confidence and self-worth.

You could be in danger of blackmail.

If you send a picture you would not want other people to see, then you could be in danger of blackmail. The person who received it might threaten to share the photo unless you send them more.

If you are gay or bi-sexual, this could include threatening to 'out' you, or you could experience homophobic or bi-phobic bullying, along with the humiliation of the image shared. If you are exploring your sexuality or gender, you can get advice from a trusted organisation like Stonewall.

Pressuring someone to send an image.

If you are pressuring someone to send you sexually explicit or nude pictures, this is abusive and not normal or acceptable. If they are under 18 it is illegal to take, possess or share an indecent image.

What about forwarding on a picture. Someone has sent you.

Do not share anyone else's nude pictures. If you forward a nude or sexually explicit picture or video of someone without their consent, you are breaking the law and taking part in abuse that could cause them serious distress.

Advice.

I have been asked to send a nude pic – what should I do?

It can be stressful when you do not want to send a nude pic but you do not want to be bullied for not sending one either. It is important to know that many people have been in this situation before and help and support is available. Childline offers some great tips, like giving you killer comebacks using its ZIPIT app when someone is pressuring you for a pic. You can also contact them to get support from an expert.

What can I do if someone is threatening to share photos of me?

If someone is threatening to send your nude picture to others, then they are committing a serious crime and the best thing to do is get help.

Do not give in to threats. Walk away and tell an adult you trust. If you feel you are in immediate danger call 999. If your pictures used against you then you can report it to CEOP, (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) they help young people targeted online or suffering sexual abuse.

What can I do if someone shares a pic I sent?

It can be upsetting to find out someone has done this but there are things you can do. Tell someone you trust as soon as possible, such as a parent, guardian or teacher so can take action and try to stop the image shared further. It may be embarrassing but remember you are not the first person this has happened to and your school will have ways of dealing with this. Childline and Thinkuknow offer lots of practical advice and support, such as how to request images deleted from some sites.

Should you send pictures to someone you have only met online?

Remember that people you are in contact with online may not be who they say they are or even be the same age as you. If someone you have met online is putting pressure on you to send sexual images of yourself or do sexual things on webcam, you can report it to CEOP who can help stop this. Visit Childline and CEOP for more advice about sexting and online safety and if you are in immediate danger, call 999.

If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender sometimes it might seem easier to meet other LGB&T people online, especially if you are not out, and it can be hard when other people you know are starting relationships but you have not. However, sending nude pics to somebody you do not know can be dangerous. There might be an LGB&T group in your local area where you could meet other young LGB&T people in confidence, supported by a professional adult.

What should you do if you are worried about a friend?

If your friend is worried about sexting and saying things to you like 'I didn't really want to send it but...' They might need help.

Talk to them and let them know where they can get help.

Is it OK to ask someone for a nude pic if you are in a relationship?

If somebody does not want to send a nude pic, it is important that you accept that and do not try to change their mind. Pressuring somebody into sending a nude pic is wrong and there can be serious consequences. Do not forget that if someone is under 18 it is illegal to send pics of themselves and for you to possess them.

My mates keep pressuring me to get a nude pic of someone but I do not want to, what can I do?

It is wrong to pressure anyone to do something not want to do. Some people see having nude pics on their phone as a status symbol, but they have may have pressured others to send them the photos. If your mates are pressuring you to, this is wrong and it is abusive behaviour. If someone is under 18, it is illegal for them to send nude or sexually explicit pics of themselves and for you to possess or share them.