

# KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE ONLINE



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ONLINE VIOLENCE AND HOW TO STAY SAFE



Living in an increasingly online world has many benefits when it comes to connecting with others; but we need to make sure we are doing so in a way that feels good for everyone.

Here are some tips and tools to be able to understand common online safety risks for youth, the age of consent and strategies for keeping yourself and others safe online.

If you are seeking additional resources related to online safety, please email [wiceducator@gwwomenincrisis.org](mailto:wiceducator@gwwomenincrisis.org). If you or someone you know has or is experiencing online violence. Please connect with Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis' 24-Hour Crisis Line at 519-836-5710 / 1-800-265-SAFE (7233).



## COMMON ONLINE SAFETY RISKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### Sextortion

Sextortion is blackmail. It involves one person threatening to send a sexual image or video of you to friends, family or others if you don't provide more sexual images/videos or do what they ask.

### Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images

When an intimate or nude picture is sent to another person or is taken without consent (ex: you are on webcam or a video chat app and someone films or takes a photo of you in an intimate moment without your consent).

Note: If you are under 18, nude photos you send someone can never legally be posted online. If you are over 18, you need to give your consent for someone to post online. Please see consent guidelines for further details.

### Cyberbullying

Bullying that occurs online through a variety of different devices and apps. This form of bullying is repeated, targeted at a specific person or group and intended to cause harm. This can involve someone sharing rumours about you online, sending hurtful messages and more.

### Online Luring and Grooming

When individuals utilize online platforms such as social media, gaming and digital apps to target, gain information about and personal access to individuals in an effort to attempt to recruit them into sex trafficking.

# WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent means that both people freely agree to participate. Consent is not present if another person is pressured into doing something they aren't comfortable with.

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# UNDERSTANDING THE AGE OF CONSENT

The legal age of consent in Canada is 16 but there are exceptions, often called the "close in age" exception.

If you are...

Your partner must be  
less than...

12 or 13

2 years older

14 or 15

5 years older

# WHEN CONSENT IS NOT POSSIBLE

Sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18 is always illegal if:

- The older person is in a position of trust or authority (a parent, coach, teacher etc.)
- There is exploitation or dependency (ex: younger person reliant on older sexual partner for care or support and or/older partner ut

Children under the age of 12 are not able to consent to sexual activity.



## KEEPING YOURSELF AND OTHERS SAFE ONLINE

While online spaces can be a fun way to share experiences with others, it's important to remember that some people will try to take advantage of others through online platforms like social media.

Keep reading to learn more about how to avoid risks online and how to keep yourself safe.

- It's ok to interact with people online, but not for them to make you feel uncomfortable. You always deserve to have a choice on what you share and what people share with you online. In a healthy and caring relationship, your comfort levels should always be considered and respected.
- It's ok to trust people, but know that people are not always who they say they are. One tip is to only engage with people online that you already know.
- It's ok to assume people have good intentions, but it's wise not to accept gifts or arrange to meet someone you don't know well.
- Be careful of how much personal information you share online, it can be used against you. Keep personal information private, like your full name, phone number and where you live. When possible, keep a private profile where you need to give permission for individuals to see your social media profiles. Do not share your social media or phone passwords with others.
- Trust your gut instinct. If something feels off, if you feel pressured into doing something you don't want to do, or if something seems too good to be true, trust that you know what is best for you.

## IF SOMEONE HAS MADE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE OR UNSAFE ONLINE YOU CAN:

- Block and stop all communication with the contact
- Refuse to give in to someone uttering threats who doesn't take no for an answer
- Report those online who are causing harm to the social media platform
- Seek help from others (see below)

## WHERE CAN YOU GET HELP?

- If a situation feels out of control and you're not sure what to do, ask for help from a trusted parent, teacher, or another safe adult
- If you have concerns about someone sharing intimate images of you online, report it [cybertip.ca](https://www.cybertip.ca)
- Get help removing sexual images or videos of yourself from the internet at [NeedHelpNow.ca](https://www.needhelpnow.ca)
- Call **Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis' 24-Hr Crisis line** at 519-836-5710 or toll free at 1-800-265-SAFE
- If you someone is threatening to share intimate images of you online, you can also contact the police