

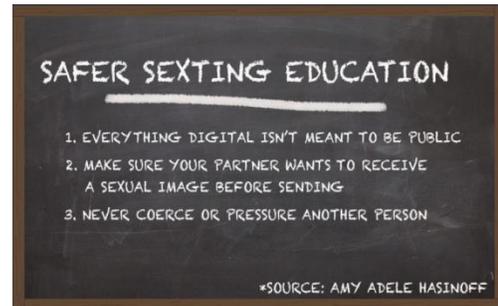
# Lesson Plan: Should Underage Sexting Be A Crime?

By Rachel Roberson

## Featured resources

KQED's The Lowdown and Above the Noise: [Should Underage Sexting Be a Crime?](#)

Common Sense Media: [Talking About Sexting](#)



Julianna Cecere/KQED

## Opening quick write prompt:

Would you do something risky to impress a friend or significant other? If so, what kind of risk would you take? If not, why?

*A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.*

## Objective

- Students will define underage sexting and analyze its potential risks and consequences.
- Students will evaluate and reflect on the legal consequences of sexting and whether they think the current punishments are appropriate for teens caught sexting with other teens.

## Essential Question and Lesson Context

**What are the legal and emotional consequences of sexting as a teenager? Should underage sexting be a crime or should it be addressed in other ways, especially when it is done consensually?**

Underage sexting is a tricky issue to talk about in schools. Yet the risks of sexting are a serious concern for students, particularly given the potential severe legal consequences. Recently, there has been a growing push against criminalizing consensual underage sexting in favor of more age-appropriate guidance and education. All the more reason for students to think through this issue in settings like classrooms, which are typically less socially charged and peer-focused than conversations teens may have on their own.

Because sexting is classified as child pornography in [many states](#), teachers are mandated to report it. When discussing this issue with students, be honest about this legal requirement if it applies to your state. Before starting a conversation, let students know the class will focus on the legal and emotional implications of sexting, not any personal experiences. Make it clear that resources are available if students are struggling with unwanted sexting or bullying of any kind. Invite them to speak with you privately and post ways they can connect to counselors, [helplines](#), and [other resources](#) online or in your community.

## Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the activity, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Consensual (adj.)	Agreed to, done with the permission of the people involved
Censor (v.)	To remove any content considered to be offensive, immoral or harmful
Explicit (adj.)	Showing something openly, leaving no doubt about the meaning
Prosecute (v.)	To hold a trial against a person accused of a crime
Tantamount (adj.)	Equal to something in value or meaning

## Investigate

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to gauge how students think about risk-taking in relationships with friends or romantic partners. It is likely students will admit only to low-risk behaviors, but it will provide a jumping off point for the discussion.
- Explain that students will be reading about and watching a video that explores the issue of consensual sexting among teenagers. This is a risky behavior, much more risky than the examples students probably mentioned when discussing the quick-write prompt. Explain that the issue is important to talk about because there are serious consequences to sexting that can cause serious legal problems and emotional distress.
- Remind students that the class will focus on sexting as an issue, and that they should not share personal experiences in a classroom setting. If they have a personal concern or are worried about a friend, they should talk to you after class or seek help from a trusted adult.
- Point to where you have posted links to resources related to sexting and cyber-bullying, such as a whiteboard, poster or online document. It's important to post these resources in a place students can make note of them anonymously.
- As a class or in small groups, students watch the [Above the Noise episode](#) found at the top of The Lowdown post.

- **Stop the video at 1:36 and ask:** How has sexting changed over time as technology has changed?
  - **Stop at 2:01:** Why is sexting considered “risky business?” What factors make sexting high-risk behavior, even when it’s done consensually?
  - **Stop at 2:18:** How is revenge porn different from consensual sexting?
  - **Stop at 3:59:** What are some legal consequences of getting caught sexting?
  - **Stop at 4:55:** What are some alternatives to criminal punishment for teens caught sexting? Why do some lawmakers and youth advocates favor these alternatives?
  - **Stop at the end of the video:** Based on what you’ve learned in the video, do you think underage sexting should be a crime? Why or why not? On a T-chart, make a list of the evidence for and against making underage sexting a crime.
- Individually or in small groups, students read [The Lowdown post](#). As they read, students should add to the T-chart, either on an online document or in their notes.
  - After students finish reading, add to the class T-chart using evidence from The Lowdown post.
  - **Transition to the Make and Share:** Tell students they will have a chance to share their response to this issue in the comments section of The Lowdown. The first time they comment, students must sign in to [Disqus](#), a free discussion app embedded in The Lowdown.
    - To sign in to [Disqus](#), click the “Comments” button at the bottom of the post.
    - Click the blue “Get Started” button in the gray “Welcome to Disqus” box.
    - Students will need to enter a username. We recommend first name, last initial.
    - After signing in for the first time, students must verify their email address before commenting. A verification email will appear in their inbox once they sign in to Disqus.

## Make and Share

- Individually or in small groups, students post in the comments section in response to the debate about whether underage sexting should be considered a crime.
  - Responses should be supported by evidence from the Above the Noise episode, The Lowdown post, or other research on the topic. (See [the Source List](#))
  - Encourage students to reply to other comments after posting their response. Remind them to use evidence to support their claims and respectful language when replying to others.
- Students can create their own response or use the following questions as a starting point:
  - **Make your case:** Should underage sexting be considered a crime?
  - **Explore both sides:** In your opinion, what’s the best reason to criminalize underage sexting among teenagers? What’s the most compelling reason not to criminalize this behavior and find other ways to address it? Explain using evidence.
  - **Dive into research:** How does your state classify underage sexting? What about revenge porn? What are the penalties in your state for both acts?

- o **Personal take:** What would you say to a friend if you found out s/he was sexting with a romantic partner who was the same age? What advice would you give based on what you have learned?

### Assessment/Reflection

- Students reflect on what they have learned either through a class discussion or in writing:
  - o What have you learned about this issue? Did your opinion change or stay the same as you learned more?
  - o What was it like to post your responses publically and reply to other posts? What did you learn from other students? What do you hope they learned from you? What will you do the next time you post a comment in response to The Lowdown?

*Circle chats, small-group discussions and [think-pair-share](#) provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.*

### Extension/Homework

**Write/speak locally:** Students turn their opinions about this issue into a letter, short speech or presentation, then research ways to make their voice heard in their community. (Example: Speaking during the public comment section of a city council meeting, posting on an online forum, etc.) For a list of how to contact local officials in your area, check out [KQED Learning's Local Election Toolkit](#).

### Common Core and NGSS standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1</a>	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA Literacy.CCRA.R.7</a>	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1</a>	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
<a href="#">NGSS.SEP.7</a>	Engaging in argument from evidence
<a href="#">NGSS.SEP.8</a>	Obtaining, evaluating and communicating information