

# WHAT IS CONSENT?



**Consent** is actively saying yes – with both your body and your language. Consent is enthusiastic, informed and continuous!

We should keep talking about consent, to help support healthy relationships, prevent harm and know the facts.

**FACT: Consent is NOT a one-time thing. Research in the UK suggests around 1 in 20 people aged 11-17 years have been sexually abused (NSPCC, 2021).**



You can withdraw consent or change your mind anytime- consent should always be gained and never presumed. You should not feel pressured into consenting into anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. Always ask questions and use language such as 'would you like to...' or 'can I...' and respect their choice.



The law states consent to sex must be given freely- meaning, no one should be forced into having sex and if someone feels frightened or threatened, they cannot freely consent. Some people may not be able to consent due to a mental health disorder or illness that means they are unable to make a choice.

**FACT: Consent is continuous, even if you are in a relationship**



Consent is continuous and should be gained throughout all relationships, all the time. A date, relationship or marriage does not affect your right to total control of your body. It is important to have good communication between partners to ensure everyone is consenting and that both partners understand what they are consenting to.



Human rights surrounding consent are embedded into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights- as all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

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**FACT:** Recent research discovered that 76% of girls aged 12-18 years had been sent unsolicited nude images of boys or men, this is known as 'Cyberflashing'.



Consent is equally important on and offline.



There are specific laws surrounding consent online including it being illegal to take or share a video or photo of someone 18 years of age or younger engaging in sexual activity. Regardless of the age of the people involved, any sexual contact in or offline without consent is illegal. In Britain, the law outlines that someone cannot consent to sex if they are under 16 years old.

**FACT:** Someone can be incapable of consenting because of the effect of alcohol, drugs or another substance.



No-one asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted or raped- be aware of incidences when someone incapable of consenting.



The law also states that someone cannot consent if they are asleep or unconscious.

**FACT:** If you are unsure whether someone is consenting or not, you should stop immediately.



Someone may not say obvious/ direct words like 'stop', 'no' or 'I don't want this' but appear uncomfortable or unhappy. Non-consensual body language includes pushing you away or avoiding eye contact. Remember, consent can be withdrawn anytime.

## Where can I get support

You can get support by calling Childline on 0800 1111 or by visiting [childline.org](http://childline.org) or calling the RASAC helpline on 01738 630965. If you are an adult with concerns about a young person you can call the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000.