

Online Sextortion: A Teens's Guide

What to know, what to do, and where to find help

Looking for a guide for parents or caregivers?

Online Sextortion: A Parent's Guide explains how adults can recognize warning signs, respond supportively, and help young people navigate what comes next.

What Is Online Sextortion?

Online sextortion happens when someone threatens to share your intimate images or personal info to pressure you into doing something you don't want to do. They may demand more images, money, or continued communication.

It can happen on social media, gaming platforms, messaging apps, or anywhere else you communicate with people online. Sometimes the person is a stranger. Other times, it's someone you've met online or someone you thought you knew.

No matter how the situation began, the responsibility lies with the person making the threats, not with you.

Is This My Fault?

 NO

If this is happening to you, here's what you can do:

- Stop contact. If it's safe to do so, stop responding and block the person anywhere they can contact you.
- Save the evidence. Take screenshots of messages, usernames, and profile information before blocking them, if it's safe to do so.
- Don't send more images or money. Giving the person what they ask for doesn't guarantee they'll stop and they may continue making demands.
- Tell an adult you trust. This could be a parent, caregiver, family member, teacher, coach, or school counselor.
- Report it. Report the account on the platform where it happened and make a report to [NCMEC's CyberTipline](#).

IF YOU'VE ALREADY SENT IMAGES, SENT MONEY, OR RESPONDED TO THE PERSON, YOU CAN STILL ASK FOR HELP.

What Happens If I Ask for Help?

Telling someone about online sextortion can feel intimidating. You might worry about getting in trouble, losing access to your phone, or disappointing the adults in your life.

Telling someone you trust means you don't have to figure out what to do next by yourself.

They can help you:

- Report the account or messages.
- Preserve evidence, if needed.
- Request image removal through services like Take It Down.
- Protect your accounts and privacy.
- Connect you with additional support if you're feeling overwhelmed.

How Can I Stay Safer Going Forward?

A few things to keep in mind when you're talking to people online:

- Be cautious with people you only know online, even if they seem friendly or trustworthy.
- Remember that profiles, photos, and even video calls can be fake.
- If someone asks you to keep a conversation secret, pressures you to send images, or makes you feel uncomfortable, it's okay to end the conversation.
- You never owe anyone your time, attention, images, or an immediate response.
- Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, step away and talk to someone you trust.

Where Can We Go for Help?

- **NCMEC CyberTipline** — report exploitation: [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cyberTipline.org)
- **Take It Down** — free service to help remove or prevent spread of intimate images of minors: [TakeItDown.NCMEC.org](https://www.TakeItDown.NCMEC.org)
- **StopNCII.org** — image-hash based removal support (for adults 18+, or older teens in some cases)
- **Crisis Text Line** — text “HOME” to 741741
- **Thorn** - text “THORN” to 741741
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** — call or text 988
- School counselors, pediatricians, and trusted family members
- Local law enforcement, when appropriate