


# Sex, Technology & Your Teen

Technology	Sexual Use	Privacy Tips
<p><b>E-mail</b>  <i>Electronic letters that are sent with computers or cell phones. Pictures and other files can be attached to an email.</i></p>	<p>Emails can have sexual content. This content can either be sexual language or attached sexual pictures.</p>	<p>Email and all attachments can be widely forwarded, or sent to others. Talk to your teen about this privacy risk.</p>
<p><b>Instant Message (IM)</b>  <i>Real-time messages sent back and forth between two people with computers or cell phones.</i></p>	<p>IMs can have sexual content. This content can be sexual language.</p>	<p>To prevent forwarding IMs, your teen can set chats “off the record.” This means no record of the conversation will be saved. Text can still be copied and pasted.</p>
<p><b>Text Message</b>  <i>Short messages sent to someone’s cell phone from another cell phone. Pictures can also be sent through text messages.</i></p>	<p>Text messages can have sexual content. This content can be sexual language or attached sexual pictures.</p>	<p>Your teen can send anonymous text messages through services such as <a href="http://www.anontxt.com">www.anontxt.com</a>. This will keep their identity private.</p>
<p><b>Chat Rooms</b>  <i>A virtual room that allows people to chat back and forth in real-time.</i></p>	<p>Chats can have sexual content. Users can also be invited to chat in a private room.</p>	<p>Remind your teen to keep his/her identity private by choosing a screen name. A screen name is an alias or name different from your real name.</p>
<p><b>Social Networking Websites</b>  <i>Online websites that allow users to build a customized “profile” webpage. Profiles contain short biographical information along with pictures and interests. Users can become friends with other users and share information.</i></p>	<p>Social networking sites can be used to meet people for sexual relationships.</p>	<p>Your teen can control what profile information is viewed by the public. Talk to your teen about changing the privacy settings to limit viewers of their site. Remind your teen not to post phone numbers or home addresses publicly.</p>



**An Update on Text Messaging:**

Sexual text messaging (sending naked and partially naked pictures through texts) can be illegal in the US for minors. Some teens who have sent or received sexual text messages have been charged with child pornography. This can lead to expulsion from school, possible jail time or getting registered as a sex offender. Talk to your teen about the legal consequences of sexual text messaging.

Chart adapted from: Subrahmanyam, Kaveri and Patricia Greenfield. 2008. “Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships.” *The Future of Children*, 18(1), 119-146.