

Porn Literacy

Porn literacy is about educating people on thinking critically about what sexual content they may see on devices, online or in the media in general.

Why do young people access pornography?

- It can be shown to them by others.
- They may accidentally come across it by searching for something and use a general, common word that is linked to pornography content in searches. They may click on a pop-up or other clickbait material.
- They may come across it when trying to find information about puberty, sexual changes as they grow, or simply, how to have sex.
- Accessing it intentionally out of curiosity, after having been shown pornography by someone else, or having accidentally come across it the first time (CCER, 2023).

Why we need to educate young people about sexual content they may come across?

Viewing pornographic material often gives young people a skewed and unrealistic idea of what it means to be masculine and then the unrealistic expectations of how women should look and respond whilst engaging in sexual activity (Healy-Cullen et al 2024).

Research into the effects of the consumption of pornography shows alarming ideas around attitudes supporting violence against women, more so when violent pornography is viewed. There is also a correlation with the acceptance of rape myths and the viewing of pornographic content (Hald, Malamuth and Yuen 2009).

Facts about pornography

Pornography is more accessible, with most young people coming across pornography by accident, research says these young people are on average around 7 to 8 years of age when they first accidentally view pornography, this is consistent with what we see and hear from clinicians and work with schools (BBFC 2019).

Pornography is becoming more extreme, with more accessibility, people are becoming desensitised to content that was once regarded as alarming. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way pornography is being produced and consumed, further impacting what is considered 'normal' sexual activity.

Sexual photos or videos are being created using AI, making it hard to differentiate whether the video or photos are real or not, often showing actions or words that a person hasn't done and then being uploaded and shared without their consent or knowledge.

The impacts of technology

Since 2010, there has been an increase in young people displaying problematic or harmful sexual behaviours which they are exposing other young people to. These behaviours may be potentially linked with the advancement of technology devices which have developed to allow people to stay connected to online spaces in a variety of ways and to access downloadable content at faster rates.

Portable devices allow young people, in particular, access to answers to their questions anywhere and at any time of day or night. Technology allows people to connect more readily with others and facilitates anyone from anywhere in the world, at any given time to contact others and receive downloadable content from others at faster speeds/ if not instantly.



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Conversation starters

- Has there been something you have seen online that has ever made you feel a bit strange or unsure, and wonder if it's something you shouldn't have seen?
- Have you ever come across pictures or videos of people online without their clothes on?

Why are these important questions to ask?

As children get older, they often have questions about their bodies and how their bodies might change. Sometimes they might try and get answers to their questions by going online.

Often answers to private topics about their body might show them or tell them things that aren't actually what happens in real life. It is common to have questions about their body, and it's important to respond with you can always ask me and I will do my best to answer or find out the correct answer to your question, even questions that you might think are really private. You can ask me anything.

Online safety agreements or safety plans:

It's important to not completely ban devices from children or make them feel embarrassed or ashamed to ask us private questions, it's important to keep the lines of communication open and use teachable moments to start conversations from a young age.

As part of keeping young people safe and healthy, it's important to adopt a no devices in private rooms of house rule. All devices that connect online should only be used in the open spaces of the house. At night, devices should be turned off or go on a recharging station which stays in the main area of the home, apart from keeping children safe from potential grooming and exploitation online, it also ensures they have time to wind down and time to sleep and be disconnected from the world.

It's a good idea to sit down as a household and develop a media agreement or media plan, so that everyone is on the same page. If there are a variety of ages you may have some more private conversations with older children, to ensure some reasons for agreements are clear but age-appropriate.

If household rules about the usage of devices are broken, it's important not to threaten a ban on the use of devices, as this can place a young person at greater risk. A young person is less likely to seek help from an adult if they feel they will be punished and the device will be taken away. It's important to have discussions about why it's important to have safety rules/guidelines and try to find solutions to problems that arise with your children.



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Further information, resources and support for parents:

[It's Time We Talked](#)

[ESafety Commissioner](#)

[Raising Children Network](#)

References:

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