

# Pornography

Pornography is often misleading, degrading, objectifying, and violent. This dangerous combination shapes children's early sexual wiring and perceptions of sexuality, consent, sexual violence, gender equality, and intimate relationships (Culture Reframed).

Today's online world makes hardcore, explicit, degrading, and misleading porn easy to access from any internet-connected device including: phones, gaming consoles, tablets, and even e-readers.

**Pornography is “any material that ‘is predominantly sexually explicit and intended primarily for the purpose of sexual arousal’”**

— Attorney General Commission on Pornography



## ▶ Harms

**Mental health problems:** Among young adults, symptoms of depression, anxiety, lower self-worth, shame, and suicidal ideation are linked with frequent porn use.

**Changes in the brain:** In adolescents, the prefrontal cortex, which drives reason and impulse control, is not yet fully developed. This puts them at greater risk of developing problematic porn use.

**Relationship and identity problems:** Poor social functioning and identity development are connected to porn use. Children/teens get a false sense of how common extreme sex acts are.

**Aggression and objectification:** While correlation does not necessarily prove causation, users are six times more likely to be sexually aggressive and objectify partners.

**Problematic and addictive behaviors:** Use is associated with high craving and impulse control. Impulsivity can create addictive behavior.

**Physical comparison:** Both boys and girls experience insecurities around their bodies and performance.

**1 in 3 children see hardcore porn by age 12.**

**88% of porn scenes contain violent images.**

— Culturereframed.org

Online Harms Prevention Action Kit  
[fairplayforkids.org/onlineharmskit](https://fairplayforkids.org/onlineharmskit)



## ▶ Protect Your Child

**Delay giving a smartphone/social media** as long as possible.

**It is an option to \*not\* give your child an internet-connected device or social media.** Some families find this easier than policing time and content on devices. Text-and-call-only phones are an alternative.

**If you have already given your child/teen a smartphone, you can still transition back to a basic**

**phone or no phone** (see tips here). If your child exhibits significant phone dependency, seek support from a mental health professional. Reset Your Child's Brain outlines a detailed plan.

**In age-appropriate ways, share the harmful effects of pornography.** Communicating openly with your children builds trust and sets you up as the person they will come to when they see pornography or something disturbing online.

## ▶ Start a Conversation

This may feel uncomfortable for us to talk about, but since we don't have laws to make the internet safe for kids yet, toxic content like porn is easy for kids to find. Most kids come across porn by accident.

Here are some ideas:

**Have you seen sexual images or disturbing images online?**

**Please know that you can share this with me and you will not be in trouble; I will not take your devices away.**

**Has anyone you don't know ever asked you to share personal information?**

**Has anyone asked you for a naked image or video?**

**Have any friends had experiences online that made you uncomfortable or scared?**

*Note: This is also an opportunity to talk about your values when it comes to sex, porn, relationships, etc.*

## ▶ Take Action



- Use parental controls to block pornography from your child's devices. Know that your child may find workarounds including burner phones, so check your router monthly for activity.
- Closely supervise/monitor young teens' online activity. Keep laptops and tablets in common spaces, and create a family tech agreement.
- Has your child viewed pornography by accident or intentionally? Try not to panic! You are not alone and staying calm will support your child. Consider the COMPOSE model created for parents to respond effectively when their child has viewed pornography [here](#).

Scan for full kit and more resources on each topic's tab

