

# Talking about Pornography

- Loosely defined, pornography, or “porn” is material (usually images or video) that depicts sexual activity and that is intended to cause sexual excitement.
- In Canada, porn is considered to be adult material so it’s against the law for anyone under the age of 18 to buy it or watch it.
- Porn is not bad or necessarily harmful, it’s just not for kids. Adults can decide whether they want to watch it. It can be healthy and arousing for adults to watch alone or with a partner.
- Creating or watching pornography involving animals, children and violence is illegal for everyone, no matter how old you are.
- Porn is entertainment. It’s not real. The people in porn are actors.
- Sometimes kids come across porn online, either by accident or by searching for it. If this happens, I want you to come and tell me. You won’t get in trouble, even if you searched for it on purpose (although I don’t want you to do that). I just want to help you make sense of what you saw and answer any questions you might have.
- Porn doesn’t reflect what a typical healthy sexual relationship looks like. Porn rarely depicts a healthy, average person’s body. Instead, it shows us what society tells us is beautiful and sexy.
- Porn only represents one aspect of the complex experience a sexual relationship is. If a young person feels aroused by watching something they know is violating, disrespectful, or just plain wrong, it can lead to feelings of shame and guilt. I don’t want this for you.
- Because in much of pornography, “no” means “yes”, it can lead to confusion about what sexual consent looks like and sounds like.
- In much of porn the consent conversation does happen, but does so before the cameras roll. This can leave viewers mistakenly thinking that consent doesn’t matter.
- Porn may also omit important conversations about condom use.
- Porn puts ideas in consumers’ heads about what’s expected from certain people during sex (i.e. girls might feel like they should be up for anything, enjoy things they really don’t enjoy, and that it’s not an option to say no. Boys might learn that they need to go for hours, should take charge, and objectify their partner because that’s what’s sexy and cool). Obviously, this can affect future sexual relationships, especially for those who haven’t been in one yet.
- It’s a smarter idea to wait until adulthood to decide whether or not you want to watch porn. It can be disturbing, confusing and misleading and that’s not what I want your first exposure to a sexual relationship to be. Better to develop the critical eye that comes with life experience first, then it will be easier to know that to believe and what not to believe.
- Curiosity about sexuality and bodies is important and awesome, and pornography isn’t a reliable source of information. Talking to trusted adults (like me!), exploring educational websites and apps and reading sexual health books are a more productive way to learn.

