



# How to Talk to Youth about Online Extortion

The following information is meant to help parents and educators speak to youth about an emerging issue of sextortion. Cybertip.ca, Canada's tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children, has identified a new trend where youth are being exploited through sextortion.

**Sextortion involves individuals who coerce youth into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual acts via webcam and then blackmail them with the threat of distributing the sexual images/videos if they do not pay money or provide more sexual images/videos.**

## Why Youth are Vulnerable

Teens' brains are wired for social interacting and bonding with others. Their need for acceptance and belonging strongly drives their decisions. Puberty increases experimentation, sexual curiosity and sexually arousal. These hallmarks of adolescence increase their vulnerability towards sexual exploitation.

## Risks to Youth

Online conversations that may initially appear as friendly banter can easily progress to sexual conversations. Understandably, youth may feel intrigued and flattered by these conversations and continue to engage thinking it's harmless. In other instances, the young person may really believe that she or he is in a relationship with the person they are communicating with online. Live chat, videos or webcams are commonly introduced for the purpose of receiving non-sexual pictures, but can progress to sending nude or partially-nude pictures, and possibly sexually-explicit content. This content may later be used to blackmail or extort the teen.

## What You Can Do

Have conversations with youth about the risks associated with using technology to experiment sexually and the potential risk of blackmail/extortion. Conversations with youth are necessary as:

- Youth will often comply with threats received online in effort to try to manage the situation on their own.

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- Situations escalate quickly and youth find themselves in over their heads.

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- It is often very difficult for them to seek adult assistance as they are so embarrassed and terrified that the sexual pictures will be distributed to people they know.

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- Youth require supportive responses from adults to help them manage serious situations they encounter online.

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- Youth need practical steps for how to get out of harmful situations and to understand that they can come to adults for help.

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- Adults have an obligation to be responsive and supportive when youth make mistakes.

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## How to Speak to Youth about the Issue

### 1 Consider starting the conversation with the following dialogue:

"I want to talk to you about a serious situation that I have heard is happening to some youth in Canada.

There have been a few situations where youth have been threatened by individuals online to send money to them or else their sexual pictures would be distributed to all of their friends.

There was a serious situation where an incident like this happened to a 15-year-old boy. He was chatting with someone he thought was 15-year-old girl. They moved their chat to a video site and he exposed himself to the girl, thinking it was all in fun. Two days later, the boy received a message from a man who had been posing as the 15-year-old-girl. The man threatened the boy, telling that he must pay \$250 within the next two days or the man would send the sexual pictures of the youth to all his friends on his social networking accounts. It was discovered that the man was also blackmailing 20 other youth. Everything worked out safely for this youth, but many other kids sent the money.

If you ever find yourself in a situation where something goes wrong, it is important for you to know that you can always come to me or another safe adult for help. Your safety and protection is always the number one priority."

## Sign-up to receive Cybertip.ca Alerts

Cybertip.ca Alerts are notifications sent out to inform the public of concerning technology trends and new resources designed to increase children's personal safety. As Canada's national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children, the information reported to Cybertip.ca enables us to identify the online risks children and youth are facing. Recognizing that it can be difficult to keep up with technology, signing up for these alerts provides you with important information to help keep your family safe while using the various popular platforms on the Internet. [cybertip.ca/app/en/signup](https://cybertip.ca/app/en/signup)



### 2 Explain that what happened to the youth is called extortion and it is illegal.

**Extortion is when a person trying to get another person to do something might:**

- threaten the person (through words or actions)
- accuse the person of something
- be violent or scare another person through words or actions (such as pushing, yelling, throwing things, breaking things, etc.)

### 3 Reassure youth that if they ever end up in a problem situation, adults are there to help them.

### 4 Visit [needhelpnow.ca](https://needhelpnow.ca) to show them the resources available. For more help they can also go to [cybertip.ca](https://cybertip.ca).

## REMINDERS for Youth:

Steps to take if you are dealing with blackmail/extortion online:

- 1 **Never comply with the threat**
- 2 **Stop all forms of communication with the individual (block from accounts)**
- 3 **Deactivate all accounts used to communicate with the individual**
- 4 **Speak to a safe adult about what is happening**
- 5 **Contact Cybertip.ca at [cybertip.ca](https://cybertip.ca)**