

Let's Talk About It!

A Guide to Consent
and Sexcessful
Communication

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Introduction

Sexuality can be an affirming and exciting aspect of one's life, but can be difficult to navigate sometimes. Students and professionals developed this guide to provide information and practical tips on cultivating **sexcess** – making choices about sexual activity that are centered on consent, healthy relationships and sexual well-being.

Open communication is the foundation of sex. It makes it possible for you and your partner(s) to experiment with what you each want and how you want it. It is important to remember that you can't make assumptions about people's sexual desires or experiences – especially not based on gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, ability, body size, etc. Every person is unique!

Your friends, family, culture, faith and/or previous experiences can all influence your thoughts and feelings about sex and sexual communication. It is a good idea to reflect on your values and determine what is right for you as you read through this guide. Think about the following questions:

- How did you learn about sex?
- Do your friends talk about their sexual experiences? If so, how?
- What does sex mean to you?
- Have you ever been in a sexual situation where you were unsure about whether or not you or your partner(s) were enjoying it? What did you do?

This guide is intended for everyone -- regardless of whether or not they are sexually active -- and we hope it supports you (and any current or future partners you may have) in enjoying pleasurable and fulfilling sexual experiences that are physically and emotionally safe.

SEXUAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. It is your right to choose how – and whether or not – to express your sexuality.

You have control over your own body. It is your choice whether you want to be sexually active, when, with whom and in what manner. It is also your right to change your mind and stop at any time during any sexual activity for any reason.

2. It is your responsibility to respect the rights of others.

Only participate in sexual activity with a partner who is consenting to the activity. Consent is required by criminal law and by the University of California systemwide Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment. Sexual activity without consent, or after consent has been revoked, is sexual assault.

Look for the blue boxes
throughout this guide
for some examples of
sexcessful communication!

SEX MYTHS AND REALITIES

Unfortunately, a number of prevalent myths and problematic attitudes about sex interfere with open communication, mutual pleasure and satisfaction. Check out these orange Myths and Facts boxes throughout this guide to learn more.

MYTH: Sex should be like what we see in the movies or pornography, where partners “just know” how to pleasure each other.

REALITY: The vast majority of portrayals of sex in the mass media are unrealistic and potentially unhealthy. The only way to know what another person finds pleasurable is to ask them.

Terminology

So that we can all be on the same page, let's define some terms that are used throughout this guide.

Partner(s) or potential partner(s)

A person/people with whom one is interested in being sexual or intimate. Does not imply a specific type of relationship.

Sex or sexual activity

Encompasses physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of consensual erotic interactions. Includes kissing, caressing, massage, solo or mutual masturbation, oral sex, vaginal sex, anal sex, etc.

Consent

Consent is an affirmative, unambiguous and conscious agreement to participate in sexual activity. Consent must be ongoing, and can be revoked at any time. A person cannot give consent if they are incapacitated, forced, threatened, or below the legal age of consent (18 in California). Sexual activity without consent, or after consent has been revoked, is sexual assault.

Sexual Well-Being

“Physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.” The World Health Organization

Sexual violence

Sexual acts engaged without the consent of the other person or when the other person is unable to consent to the activity. Sexual violence includes sexual assault, rape, battery, domestic violence and stalking.

Sexual assault

An umbrella term used to describe any unwanted sex act. If any of the following are attempted or completed without consent, then a sexual assault has occurred: vaginal sex, anal sex, oral sex; touching of the breasts, buttocks or genitals (over clothes or skin-to-skin); penetration with a foreign object (i.e., fingers, sex toys, etc.).

Survivors of sexual assault are diverse with regard to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, ability, and all other individual identities. While sexual assault can happen to anyone, folks within marginalized communities tend to be disproportionately affected by violence and abuse.

Sexual assault is never the survivor’s fault, even if they were intoxicated when the assault took place. If you experienced a sexual assault in the last 5 days, please contact the on-call CARE Advocate at (866) 515-0155 for immediate support and assistance.

Intimate Partner Violence

Sometimes called domestic violence or dating violence, intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pattern of abusive behaviors based on power and control within an intimate relationship. IPV can happen in any type of relationship, regardless of length of relationship or the genders or sexual orientations of partners. Anyone of any gender identity can be an abuser and anyone of any gender identity can be a victim. Read our “Healthy Relationships” section to learn more about recognizing IPV.

Stalking

Unwanted and repeated conduct directed at a single person that would cause a reasonable person fear. Examples include: sending an individual unwanted messages or gifts; following someone or watching them; showing up uninvited to someone’s work, home or class; damaging personal property; threatening to harm someone or their family, friends or pets; monitoring someone’s social media activity; using GPS to track someone’s movements.

CONSENT

Consent

What Consent is and is Not

Consent is...

- **Informed.** Consent is an affirmative, unambiguous, conscious agreement by each person to engage in sexual activity. Everyone engaging in the sexual activity has full knowledge and understanding of what the sexual activity entails.
- **Voluntary.** Consent involves positive cooperation and must be freely given. It cannot be given if there is force, threats, menace, duress, or where a person's free will has been compromised.
- **Revocable.** Sexual activity may begin as consensual. But, once someone says "no", says they are uncomfortable, pulls away, or any other verbal or physical indication that they want the sexual activity to stop, consent has been revoked. Anything following the withdrawal of consent becomes sexual assault, regardless of the relationship between the people involved.
- **Ongoing.** Consent to one activity does not imply consent to another. Consent must be established before a different activity begins.

Consent is NOT POSSIBLE when someone is...

- **Incapacitated.** This means that a person is unable to care for themselves, which could be due to drugs or alcohol. Just to be clear, having drunk sex is not a crime. However, when someone's ability to take care of themselves has been severely impacted due to drugs or alcohol, they are unable to give consent. If someone is incapacitated due to drugs or alcohol, they may be in and out of consciousness, unable to stand or walk, vomiting, slurring their words, or unable to communicate properly.
- **Underage.** The legal age of consent in California is 18 years old. Even if someone under the age of the 18 agrees to engage in sexual activity, they are legally unable to give consent--it is still sexual assault.
- **Unconscious.** If someone is passed out, asleep, or otherwise unconscious, consent cannot be given.

Sexual activity without consent is sexual assault!

Body Language and Consent

You may have heard one of the following myths about sex and body language:

- “You can just tell when someone wants to have sex with you.”
- “Sex should flow naturally.”
- “Talking through sex is a turn-off. It kills the mood.”

These beliefs are promoted through the media, which almost never show characters talking with potential sexual partners about their sexual desires and boundaries. However, silent sex in real life is often unsexy and potentially harmful.

Furthermore, body language can be misleading. For example, a racing heart and heavy breathing may be signs someone is turned on, or signs someone is uncomfortable or scared. This is true for moaning as well, as it could mean that someone is in pain. This is just one reason why checking in with your partner(s) after consent has been established is so important. Sex is much more enjoyable when everyone is on the same page while feeling safe and comfortable.

Mutually pleasurable, safe and satisfying sexual experiences are communicative, with partners respecting each other’s boundaries. The clearest way to establish consent is to **ask for it – and get a yes.**



Navigating Consent While Under the Influence

Earlier, we discussed what incapacitation is and explained that someone **cannot** consent if they are incapacitated. Determining whether you have consent to have sex can be tricky when you or your potential partner(s) have been drinking, so let's walk through a possible scenario to show you what it might look like to establish consent under the influence. You can also check out this handy tool: bit.ly/drinkingandconsent.

You are drinking at a house party, but you're not incapacitated. You hit it off with someone, and you both go to another room so that you can be alone. You are now sitting together on a bed, and you want to have sex with them. Before you make any moves, you need to figure out if they want to have sex with you, too.

CHECK

If your potential partner has been drinking, then you need to make sure they are **not** incapacitated. Check for any of the following signs of incapacitation, keeping in mind that **some people might be incapacitated without showing any of them**:

- Slurred or incoherent speech
- Loss of balance
- Unconscious
- Vomiting
- Confusion
- More impulsive
- Falling asleep

ALCOHOL POISONING

The following are signs that someone definitely cannot give consent and are indications of alcohol poisoning:

Cold, clammy, pale or bluish skin*

Unconscious or unable to be roused*

Puking repeatedly

Slow or irregular breathing*

**If any one of these signs are present, call 9-1-1 and stay with the person while waiting for help. Make sure they are lying on their side to prevent choking. Do not leave the person to "sleep it off." During a medical emergency, cooperate fully when help arrives. Aggies Act, which is both a Good Samaritan and Medical Amnesty policy, removes punitive sanctions for first-time offenders involved with an alcohol or other drug infraction – both the person making the call for help as well as the person experiencing the medical emergency. So, be a friend and make the call!*

ASK

If they are definitely **not** incapacitated, then ask them **once** if they are interested in sexual activity. Asking more than once can be coercive, and consent is not possible when someone has been coerced. Here are some ways you could ask them:

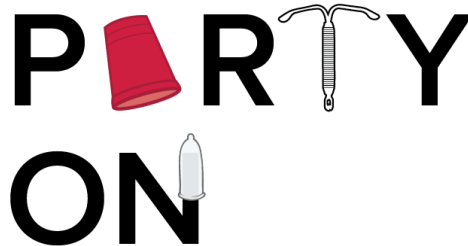
- Can I _____ your _____?
- Do you want to _____?
- I'd like to take things further. Can we _____?

KEEP CHECKING IN

If they are definitely **not** incapacitated, and they communicate that they want to engage in sexual activity with you, then you have successfully established consent! Have fun, but remember that this does not give you unlimited access to their body. Keep checking in with your partner to make sure they are okay with what is happening. Here are some ways to check in:

- Is this okay?
- Are you comfortable?
- Does this feel good?

If at any time you are unsure whether or not they are incapacitated, and you continue, then it might be sexual assault. **Don't risk it!**



For more information on sex and drinking, check out safeparty.ucdavis.edu/sex.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Healthy Relationships

What Are Healthy Relationships?

Every relationship is different. But all healthy relationships have:

- **Safety**
- **Trust**
- **Comfort**
- **Respect**
- **Honesty**
- **Independence**
- **Communication**
- **Support**
- **Boundaries**

Building Healthy Relationships:

- **Voice your boundaries, concerns, and what makes you feel safe.** Your partner(s) can't read your mind. In order for your needs to be met, you must communicate those needs. Additionally, provide your partner(s) with an opportunity to voice their needs as well.

• "I need some private time to think about this before we talk. Can we talk about this tomorrow instead?"

- **Respect each other's wishes and feelings.**

• "Thank you for sharing with me. What can I do to make sure I am giving you what you need?"

- **Understand your intentions.** Disagreements are completely normal – even in healthy relationships. When navigating conflicts, it is important that you are communicating your feelings instead of saying something to try and hurt your partner(s).

• "I felt embarrassed when you shared that story about me. I know you didn't mean to embarrass me, but before sharing that story again, please ask me if it's okay."

- **Meet half-way to make compromises, not sacrifices.** Healthy relationships are not about what one person wants all the time, and no one should have to give up what makes them feel safe or comfortable to accommodate others.

• "Let's take turns choosing what to watch on Netflix. I know you like psychological thrillers, but I really like comedies."

- **Respect each other's privacy.** Healthy relationships involve a level of autonomy and space.

• "Have fun hanging out with your friends tonight!"

Healthy Conflict Resolution:

Conflicts in relationships are normal and are inevitable, so learning to deal with them in a healthy way is crucial. Conflict may arise from differences in values, ideas, motivations, perceptions, ideas or desires. Although a conflict may seem trivial, it can trigger strong feelings that can affect the relationship.

The first step to conflict resolution is to understand your own needs first. If you don't know what you want, then you can never fully resolve any situation that might arise. After taking your own feelings and ideals into account, then you can take the next steps to understand your partner's/partners' needs. A lack of understanding about differing needs, ideals, and values can result in distance, argument or break up.

Successful conflict management relies on each partner's ability to:

- **Manage stress while remaining alert and calm.** By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication.
- **Control your emotions and behavior.** When you're in control of your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening, frightening, or punishing others.
- **Pay attention to the feelings being expressed.** This also includes the spoken words of others.
- **Be aware and respectful of differences.** By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can resolve the problem faster.

Power and Control:

Power and control dynamics are present in all interactions. These dynamics are complex, but for the purpose of this guide we will define them as follows:

Power: the ability to enact one's will, or to influence others to do what one wants.

Control: the ability to restrict another's will, or to prevent others from doing what they want.

Positive and harmonious sexual interactions are possible when partners balance their power and control. Some ways to do this include:

- Asking for consent every time
- Listening actively (check your understanding and ask for clarification).
- Speaking assertively (not passively or aggressively).

- Consider your partner’s thoughts and feelings as being as important as yours.
- Participate equally in decision-making processes.
- Be mindful of how your privileges (e.g., age, gender, class, race, stature, ability, etc.) influence your thoughts and actions and affect your partner(s).
- Openly discuss respect, power and control in your interactions.

Sexual interactions can be harmful, destructive or abusive when there is an imbalance of power and control between partners. Obvious or subtle tactics used to control or overpower include, but are not limited to:

- Criticizing, insulting, degrading, name-calling or humiliating
 - » Example: “You always act so stupid.”
- Intimidating or threatening
 - » Example: “If you do that again, I will tell everyone about your herpes.”
- Minimizing or ignoring your partner’s thoughts and feelings
 - » Example: “Quit whining! It’s not even a big deal.”
- Not being conscious of how your privileges impact your partner(s)
- Physical or sexual harassment (e.g., unwanted touching or grabbing)
- Demanding your partner’s social media passwords
- Going through your partner’s text messages and/or browsing history

These are also signs of an abusive relationship. If you think you may be experiencing abuse, we encourage you to seek assistance from available resources, such as the Center for Advocacy, Resources and Education (CARE): care.ucdavis.edu. For more resources, see the list at the end of this booklet.

MYTH: In a long-term relationship, a person does not need to obtain consent since they have already had sex with their partner many times before.

REALITY: Consent is **always** required for sex, regardless of a prior relationship or sexual activity.

SEXUAL COMMUNICATION

Sexual Communication

Sex is often considered to be taboo, so discussing it can be uncomfortable at first – and that’s okay! Simply put: to get more comfortable talking about sex, you have to talk about sex! Open and honest communication is the foundation of healthy and pleasurable sexual activity.

Sexual Vocabulary

It is a great idea to create a sexual vocabulary that you are comfortable with to discuss sexual anatomy and activities. Take a look at the box below for different types of language used to talk about sexuality. You may prefer the scientific terms, slang or words of your own creation. Some people find certain words offensive or unpleasant, and other words extremely sexy. Ultimately, it is your body, and you have the right to call your body parts what you want.

Scientific	Common/Everyday	Slang
Anus	Butt	Ass
Oral Sex	Go Down On	Eat Out
Intercourse	Have Sex	Bone

Which language types make you feel the most comfortable? Can this change depending on the situation or who you are talking to?

Challenges to Sexual Communication

There are many reasons it can be uncomfortable to talk about sex, including:

Emotions

The thought of discussing sexuality and sexual activities with a partner may make you feel uncomfortable and nervous. Many people feel this way, and acknowledging out loud that it is awkward can help break the ice. Sharing feelings, fears and concerns can also create intimacy and make it easier to relax and enjoy yourself.

Self-Knowledge

Everyone has different desires, curiosities and limits. These usually change over time, and can even vary from morning to night, or day to day. Self-exploration is a continual process of getting to know yourself sexually. For some, masturbation can be a great way to discover sexual likes and dislikes.

Use the Pleasure Profiles on the next two pages to explore your likes and dislikes.

My Pleasure Profile

Use this as a tool to help you explore and identify your likes and dislikes when it comes to sexual pleasure!

The Basics

These values influence my sexuality: _____

3 things I love about my body: _____

I feel sexiest when _____

I don't feel sexy when _____

It is easy / difficult for me to have an orgasm.

If and when I orgasm, I need _____ minutes/hours before going again

Sometimes _____ is uncomfortable / can hurt

After sexual activity, I need _____

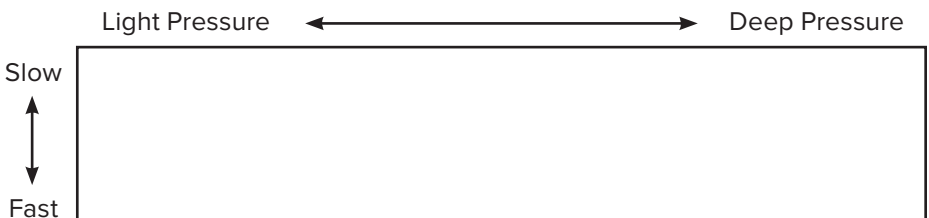
Turn Ons

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making Out | <input type="checkbox"/> Nipple play | Positions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kisses on my _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Toys | <input type="checkbox"/> Doggie |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Licking on my _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Watching porn | <input type="checkbox"/> 69 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sucking on my _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral sex | <input type="checkbox"/> Missionary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teasing over clothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Anal play | <input type="checkbox"/> Being on top |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rubbing genitals together | <input type="checkbox"/> Massage | <input type="checkbox"/> Being on bottom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuddling | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

How I Like to be Touched

Use the box to explore pressure and speed of touch that you enjoy on certain body parts. For example, if you like slow, light pressure on your chest, then write "chest" in the upper left corner. Choose words from our list, or use your own! Whatever words you use to describe your own body are valid!

- | | | | | | |
|----------|---------|-----------|--------|------------|----------|
| Butt | Nipples | Strapless | Dick | Shaft | Anus |
| Thighs | Chest | Clitoris | Breast | Head | Frenulum |
| Perineum | Vagina | Penis | Labia | Front Hole | Balls |



Pleasure Profile: Communication

Before engaging in any sexual activity, always establish consent with your partner(s). Sexual activity without consent is assault.

Before sex, we recommend talking about:

- STI/HIV status
- Safer sex methods
- Birth control (if applicable)
- Allergies
- Likes & Dislikes
- Trauma triggers
- Safe words
- Whatever else you think is important

Lines that excite me:

- It feels good when you do that.
- That really turns me on.
- It's so hot when you _____.
- I want to _____.
- How does this feel?
- What do you want right now?
- Do you like this?
- Do you want to try _____?
- I am in the mood for _____.
- Can you _____ my _____?
- _____

During sex, I like to hear:

- Whispering
- Moaning
- Compliments
- Insults
- Sweet talk
- Aggressive tone
- Music
- _____

I like to be called:

- My name
- Pet names
- Role-play names
- _____

More ways I communicate:

- Smile
- Safe gesture
- Head nod
- Eye contact
- _____

The date of my last STI/HIV test was:

I know and understand my test results: Yes | No

Sex Topics

Before we get into the details, here are some common topics to talk through before sexual activity. Take some time to read through and think about the topics that might be most important to you. Keep in mind that it is often best to have these conversations in moments that are not sexually charged -- in locations where you feel safe and comfortable.

Aftercare (needs and desires after sexual activity)

Examples: Cuddle, no contact, talk, shower, eat, sleep

- “I really love cuddling after sex. What about you?”
- “After sex, I like to be alone. Could you please give me 10 minutes?”

Disabilities (visible and/or hidden)

Impairments, how to give or receive pleasure, aids, allergies

- “I’m allergic to latex, and forgot to bring condoms. If you don’t have latex-free condoms, we need to go and get them for free at the Love Lab before we have sex.”

Experimentation and Safety

Sex toys, role play, kink, bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, sadomasochism (BDSM)

- “I really want to try out this new vibrator I bought. Do you want to try it out together?”
- “I like to be spanked sometimes. Is that something you would be comfortable doing to me?”
- “I know you are into foot massages, but I don’t like touching other people’s feet. Is there something else new that we can try together?”

Relationship Expectations

Hook-up, friends with benefits, dating, monogamy, polyamory and other types

- “I’m not looking for a long-term relationship right now.”
- “I like you and would like to see where this relationship goes, but I don’t want to be monogamous at this point.”
- “I’m only looking for fun.”

Safer sex

Birth control use, practicing harm reduction through the use of products (external condoms, internal condoms, dental dams, capes, etc.) and other strategies, and preventing STIs/HIV

- “I have an IUD, but I still want to use condoms.”
- “Do you want to try this new ribbed condom I got?”
- “I can’t wait to go down on you, but I want to use a dental dam.”
- “Since we don’t have condoms right now, I only want to have oral sex.”
- “I’m on PrEP, and get tested every 3 months.”

Sexual Desires and Boundaries

- “I love when my partners _____ my _____, but I don’t like when they _____ my _____.”
- “I know you like oral sex, but it makes me uncomfortable.”

Sexual Ethics

Respect, personal values, cultural concerns, religious beliefs

- “My religious values are important to me. Until I am married, I am only comfortable kissing.”

Sexual History

STI/HIV testing history and status, previous sexual partners and experiences

- “I am living with HIV, and am undetectable. That means there’s effectively no risk of me transmitting HIV to my sexual partners.”
- “I was tested a month ago, and my results were negative. What about you?”
- “I’ve tried _____ with a partner before, and I enjoyed it. Do you want to try it with me, too?”
- “I’ve not had vaginal sex with my previous partners, but I would like to try it with you. Is that okay?”

Substance Use (See previous section about Consent)

Navigating sexual activity while sober or under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs

- “I prefer to be sober during sex so that I can be more present.”

Trauma History

Needs, triggers, reactions (e.g., flashbacks, anxiety, numbness) and how to talk to your partner and maintain self-care

- “I was sexually assaulted a year ago, and I am still trying to get comfortable with being sexually active again.”

Step-by-Step Successful Communication

1. Think about your desires and boundaries

Here are some examples:

- I'd really like to give oral sex and maybe receive it, too.
- I'm not on birth control and don't have condoms, so I only want to cuddle and kiss.
- I only want to make out and masturbate together.

2. With an open mind, ask if they are interested in being sexual with you

Here are some ways to ask:

- "Wanna have sex?"
- "I'd really like to ____, would you be into that?"
- "Do you want to ____ or ____?"
- "Would ____ feel good to you right now?"
- "How far do you want to go?"

If you would like to initiate sex, it is always your responsibility to ask. Just because someone said yes to something before does not mean they will want to do it again or at that moment.

Ask for consent every time, and respect your partner's response.

Note: Asking more than once can be coercive, and indecision does not mean "convince me." Only yes means yes!

3. Respond accordingly and with respect

This Means No	This Means Yes
“Let’s just watch the movie”	“Absolutely”
Silence	“I’d love to”
“Maybe”	“Of course!”
“I’d rather just sleep”	Nods head “yes”
“Um...”	“Definitely!”

Remember: When in doubt, check in with your partner for clarification!

If the other person is silent, uncomfortable, or says “no,” then back off and drop it. Silence, passivity or the absence of “no” are not consent. Consider doing non-sexual activities together instead – like watching a movie or listening to music together.

If the other person says “maybe,” “um,” “okay” or is giving mixed signals, you should back off or gently ask clarifying questions.

For example:

A: “Would you like to have sex?”

B: “My roommate is coming home soon.”

This is ambiguous, so try to clarify.

A: “So does that mean you don’t want to have sex? It’s fine if you don’t, I only want to if you’re into it.”

If the other person is still hesitant and unsure, then drop it.

If the other person is enthusiastic and clearly says “yes,” then you can both start talking about and exploring sex. Refer back to the sex topics that you think are important to discuss.

Remember, “sex” includes a broad range of many sexual activities, and each person’s sexual preferences are unique. Ask specifically what your partner wants to do, and share your own desires, too. Ask about what sexual activity, position, pace, tone, intensity, etc. they’d like.

Asking specifically throughout the sexual activity will also help you become a better sexual partner, because you will know what your partner wants and how they want it.

Voicing Your Needs, Desires and Boundaries

Here are some tips for letting your partner know exactly what you do and/or do not want.

Make specific requests

It is great to know what you want, how you want it and what you do not want. Talk about your desires and dislikes as specifically as possible with your partner.

- “I would love to ____, but I don’t want to ____.”
- “____ would feel good to me, but not ____.”
- “I would like it if you ____.”

Speak up if you are unsure

If you are not sure what you want, or if you are trying something new and do not know if you like it, it is a good idea to let your partner know. Take the space and time you need to decide what you want.

- “Give me a minute.”
- “Hold on, I need to go to the bathroom.”
- “I’m not sure if I feel like doing that, let’s do ____ instead and I’ll let you know if I want to do ____ later.”

Speak up if you change your mind

If you or your partner(s) says “yes,” it does not mean you have to continue the activity if you no longer want to. If at any time you change your mind or are uncomfortable, then tell your partner(s). If they continue to be sexual with you after you declined or expressed your desire to stop the activity, that is sexual assault.

- “I thought I might like this, but I’m not comfortable with it.”
- “Right now I’m not feeling it. I don’t want to continue.”
- “That doesn’t feel good. I want to stop.”

Check in with your partner(s)

Pay attention to nonverbal and verbal signs and ask your partner for clarification. Back off if your partner seems uncomfortable or if you are getting mixed signals.

- “Are you still enjoying this? What would you like to do?”
- “Do you like it when I ____? I can’t tell.”

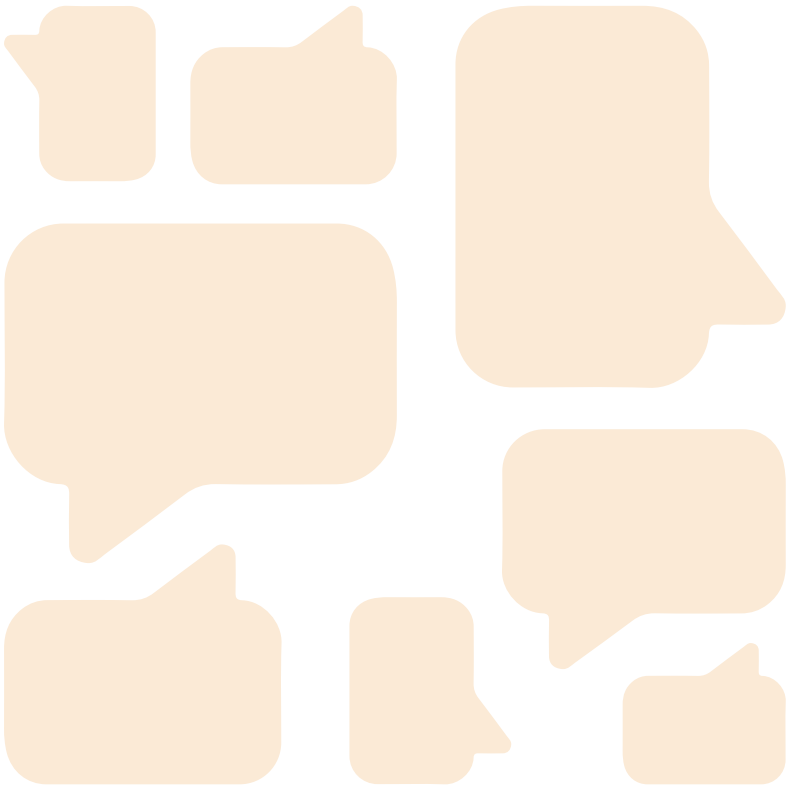
Only continue if your partner communicates a clear desire. If your partner is hesitant, silent, or does not communicate a clear “yes,” stop sexual activity.

Ask if they want to do something else

Ask about each activity before engaging in the activity. Remember that consent must be ongoing, meaning that consent for one activity does not automatically include consent for another activity. The only way to know what your partner wants is to ask them.

- “Would it feel good if I ___? Or would you like it better if I just kept ___?”
- “How would you like ___?”

How would you prefer to voice your desires and boundaries? Write your own statements in the speech bubbles below.



MYTH: Once someone gets aroused to the “point of no return,” they are unable to stop themselves from having sex.

REALITY: Anyone is capable of stopping any sexual activity at any time – nobody has ever died from “blue balls,” for example! Unwanted sexual touching or activity is **never** okay.

TEXTING, SEXTING AND DATING APPS

Texting, Sexting and Dating Apps

Technology has made it a lot easier to communicate and find dates (and hookups!), but digital communication has its own unique challenges.

Texting

Intended for quick and simple messages, texting can be great for flirting, confirming dinner plans or sharing photos. At the same time, it often causes confusion when trying to have serious conversations. The main drawback to communicating in writing is that it does not include context clues like body language, facial expressions or tone of voice to help the receiver understand exactly what the sender intended to convey. For this reason, we think serious conversations about sexuality and relationships are best had face-to-face.

The most important tip to remember when texting is to always try and provide as much context as possible, because the person on the other end of your text cannot read your mind. If that means you need to send a GIF or emoji to help you express yourself more accurately, then do it. Texting can be frustrating and take an emotional toll when there are misunderstandings, so be direct and don't make the other person guess what you are trying to say.

Sexting

Sexting can be considered a form of safer sex because there is no risk of pregnancy or STIs/HIV. However, there are still privacy and confidentiality risks that can have long-term effects. The first rule is to never send someone a sext unless they say they want one! Ultimately, always think before you sext – you cannot “unshare!” Here are some tips for making sexting safer:

- 1. Know Your Values and Boundaries.** We are always most content when we make decisions that align with our values. One helpful guideline to follow is “when in doubt, don’t.” In other words, if you think you might regret sending a sext, then you probably shouldn’t sext. Listen to your gut! If someone is pressuring you to sext with them, then that is not okay. Boundaries are always respected in healthy relationships.
- 2. Know What’s in Your Photos Before Sending Them.** If you decide to send a sext and are concerned about privacy, it’s probably best not to have any noticeable tattoos or birthmarks in the photo that might give away your identity. Similarly, you probably don’t want any of your family photos in the background, either.
- 3. Know Where the Sext is Going.** This is self-explanatory. Be sure to triple-check the recipient of your message so that you don’t end up sending a sext to the wrong person.
- 4. Don’t Drink and Sext.** Alcohol clouds judgment and lowers inhibitions, so it has the potential to enable you to do something you might regret. Wait until you’re sober and then decide whether or not you still want to send that sext message.

Dating Apps

Technology makes it easy to meet people nowadays, whether it's to talk over coffee or to just have sex. People choose to use dating apps for many reasons, whether it's to find love, casual sex, or to validate themselves when they get a match on their profile.

To keep everyone on the same page, it is important to be communicate and be direct about what you are looking for while you are on the app. If you are just wanting to hook up, then tell them. If you want to go on a date to see if it may lead to a long-term relationship, then tell them. Being honest will help to prevent misunderstandings later.

No matter what you would like from dating apps, here are some harm-reduction tips to help you stay safe if and when you decide to meet someone new:

- 1. Don't share your real phone number.** Restrict communication to the app, and consider using a pseudo-phone number (such as Google Voice) instead of your real one.
- 2. Be mindful of your social media accounts.** Consider making your profiles private, and not linking your phone number to any of them. You may also choose to use different photos for dating profiles and social media accounts so that they can't be found through Google Images, for example.
- 3. Tell someone you trust where you are going.** Consider also sending them a screenshot of your date's profile, and sharing your location with them from your phone. Feel free to also get a second opinion if you think something doesn't feel right. At the end of the day, trust your gut!
- 4. Meet in a public area during the daytime.**
- 5. Arrange your own transportation.**
- 6. Don't be afraid to leave the date early and hit that block button!**

Ultimately, you have the right to do what you want to do to make yourself feel safe. You also have the right to use dating apps and not be subjected to harm. Many dating apps have community guidelines, so if someone isn't respecting you, it is okay to report their profile.

CONCLUSION AND RESOURCES

We hope you now have a better understanding of how to communicate sexcesfully. With awareness of your desires and boundaries, on-going honest communication and respect for your and your partner(s)' rights, we hope you can enjoy safe, pleasurable and fulfilling sexual experiences. We wish you the best in creating these experiences if and when you choose to do so.

Check out the following resources for more information on sexual health, including sexual violence prevention and response.

Student Health & Counseling Services

Advice Nurse/Appointment Line

530-752-2349

Health-e-Messaging

hem.ucdavis.edu

SHCS Sexual Health Resources

shcs.ucdavis.edu/wellness/sexual-health

UC Davis Sexcess Map

bit.ly/UCDSexcessMap

Queer and Trans Health Resources

shcs.ucdavis.edu/wethrive

For student-centered sexual health content, follow the Love Lab on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter @UCDLoveLab!

Confidential Resources

Conversations with staff in these units are not considered official reports. You can speak openly without giving up any control over your situation. These units will not report your concerns to anyone else, and they will not take action toward resolving your concerns without your consent.

Center for Advocacy, Resources & Education (CARE)

Confidential crisis intervention and victim advocacy.

Advocacy includes:

- Navigating options, rights and resources
- Hospital, law enforcement and/or court accompaniment
- Advocacy for academic assistance and/or reporting violations to the Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs
- Referrals to on-campus and community resources
- Academic, employment and housing accommodations

(530) 752-3299

ucdcare@ucdavis.edu

care.ucdavis.edu

Counseling Services

North Hall

Student Health and Wellness Center

Monday to Friday 8am - 4:45pm

24-Hour Counseling Consultation: (530) 752-2349

Appointments Line: (530) 752-2349

shcs.ucdavis.edu/counseling-services

Women's Resources & Research Center (WRRC)

North Hall

M-Th 9am - 5pm, F 9am - 4pm

(530) 752-3372

wrrc.ucdavis.edu

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA+) Resource Center

Student Community Center

M 10am - 4:30pm, T-F 10am-6pm

(530) 752-2452

lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu

Academic Staff Assistance Program (ASAP)

112 A Street, Guilbert House

M-F 8am-5pm

(530) 752-2727

hr.ucdavis.edu/ASAP

Family Protection and Legal Assistance Clinic

(530) 752-6532

law.ucdavis.edu/clinics/family-protection-clinic.html

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that helped to develop this guide!**



CARE

center for advocacy,
resources & education

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**STUDENT HEALTH AND
COUNSELING SERVICES**