



NEW SEX

# The Art Of Digital Foreplay: Sexts And 'Requisexts' In Relationships

Jan 14, 2015 09:00 AM

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**J**ust like any standard text, your phone lights up when you've received a message. Hesitant but also naturally curious, you open it only to find a naked selfie accompanied by the words, "I want to see you." You wonder, *should I text back?*

The rise in technology has helped shape how sexual interactions take place today. High-quality camera and video capabilities on smartphones have taken the concept of phone sex to another level. We've come a long way from "A/S/L?" messages commonly seen in chatrooms during the 1990s. People now flaunt their bodies, as well as their storytelling prowess, to show their willingness to develop a sexual relationship with the receiver of the sext.

But before we choose to engage in this form of digital foreplay, it's important to understand everything that comes with hitting *send*.

### 1. THE ALLURE OF THE SEXT

Fun and flirty sexting initially provides a non-threatening space where people can check each other out without risking the shame or embarrassment that may occur during face-to-face interaction. Sexting is the equivalent of dirty talk without having to hear yourself say things that can make you feel uncomfortable, or the awkward feeling of fumbling over your words.

"It gives a person the time to think up just before hitting the send button. It may take you 15 minutes to write that three-line sext, but you will seem as smooth as James Bond," Cassie Fuller, sex, intimacy, and kink educator, told *Medical Daily* in an email.

A woman uses her cellphone while sitting in bed. *Photo courtesy of Shutterstock*

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It's the comfort of hiding behind a device, creating a virtual persona, that makes it so easy to play the game. And whether you're as smooth as James Bond or not, you take full advantage of the discreet exchange.

“There’s a mystique about sending something private and sexy that goes back to the Victorian era where sex was considered taboo. When a person appears one way in public and another way in private, it’s attractive, and sexting capitalizes on that dynamic and that allure,” [April Masini](#), relationship expert and author, told *Medical Daily* in an email.

The excitement that comes with the quick exchange of messages also makes sexting appealing. The release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps control the brain’s reward and pleasure centers, and regulates movement and emotional responses, drives the impulsivity of the sexts. It is responsible for regulating mood, behavior, sleep, and cognition. Dopamine also leads to ["seeking" behavior](#), which makes you want, desire, and search, thus increasing your level of arousal while sexting back and forth.

## 2. WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME TO SEXT?

The right time for sexting is up to the couple, just like when they choose to have actual sex. Experts believe it’s best to sext under certain conditions. The sexters should make sure their relationship has a foundation of communication, both partners are clear on the commitment, and that they have a healthy relationship outside of sexting.

The mental and physical need to sext can heighten when couples are not around each other, giving them the opportunity to participate in sexually explicit treats. Racy texts build up the anticipation before you see each other, but it can also lead to a "requisext,"

or sexting unwillingly to appease a partner.

The classic "Not tonight, honey, I have a headache" excuse can spare partners from sex, but not from sexts. A 2013 [study](#) published in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior* found couples in committed relationships frequently "requisext" as a means to satisfy their partners or to avoid an altercation. Those who reported engaging in requisexting feared abandonment or alienation from their partners. This can be challenging for insecure lovers who might use sexting to feel closer.

However uncomfortable it is for some tied down partners, for singletons, sending racy photos and messages can actually be a healthy form of flirtation, foreplay, or a way to meet a partner's needs while boosting intimacy.

Dr. Fran Walfish, Beverly Hills psychotherapist, author, and expert panelist on the upcoming February premiere of WE TV's *Sex Box* believes sexting can be a useful and healthy part of the seduction process if you're in an established relationship with this other person.

It's OK to sext "if you are involved in a relationship that's already passed the honeymoon period (the first three to six months), and you have verbally communicated with your partner and established a commitment to monogamy and to each other," Walfish told [Medical Daily](#).

Using provocative language or descriptive language is fine, advises Walfish, but only with a partner whom you already established a trust. "People have to be reminded, as much as we trust, whatever you sext could potentially end up viral," she said.

The question is "do you want to take that risk?"

According to a [survey](#) conducted by McAfee, it seems more than half of Americans aged 18 to 54 have taken the risk by using their cell phones to sext. A more surprising finding is not only do they save racy content, but they also share their smartphone passwords, meaning someone else could make the private messages public. Out of the respondents who have exchanged sexually charged messages or videos, one in 10 said he or she sent

explicit content to a complete stranger. These photos could become public and jeopardize the sender's identity and reputation if not done responsibly. Once you hit send, you are held accountable.

### 3. UNREALISTIC SEX EXPECTATIONS

Disrobing before a phone camera is different than live in person. It raises the bar of self-expectation and performance, especially if you sext before you've had sex with your partner. It can lead to surprise and disappointment if it's a prelude to sex. For example, Masini said, "lighting and weight gain create sext images that aren't the same as in person images."

A person who sexts doesn't necessarily translate as being good in bed. A partner can become "all text" and no action. "It can be a letdown when a partner continuously says they are going to do stuff but never follow through," Fuller said.

Dr. Michael J. Salamon, a senior psychologist and director of Adult Development Center Psychological Services in New York City, has seen this unfold in his clinical experience. "The worst disappointment I have heard regarding actual sex following sexting from several people is 'I thought that she would be wilder in bed. After all, she had some really hot pics.'"

Sexting before sex can be a good foreplay technique, but if you haven't had sex with the person yet, he or she's probably playing the field already. In a 2011 [study](#) published in the journal *Sexuality & Culture*, researchers found two-thirds of women who were either married or single looking for noncommittal flirtation and hookups online, send sexually explicit texts of photos via phone or email. This is most likely due to the imbalance of photo sexts, meaning men may be more receptive and aroused by close-up body shots than women are. Only half of the men in the study sent sexts.

But why is it that men have the impulsivity to sext their junk to “turn on” a woman? Close-up body shots of the male anatomy are actually the biggest turn off for women. It feels as if you're sexually assaulted every time you check your phone. It can be comparable to a subway flasher in New York City.

Dr. Helen Fisher, a co-author of the yearly study by [Match.com](#), believes the gender differences in sexts goes back to evolution, which may help explain why men behave this way. If a man can see a woman's body, he “can know some very basic things about age, health and, unconsciously, her ability to raise young,” she told [BetaBeat.com](#). “Women [historically] needed someone who could rear their mate and provide.”

Regardless, the same could be said of females from an evolutionary standpoint — that they'd need to see the man's body to judge his adequacy as a provider, but speaking for today's women, that's not always a turn on. Ditch the creepy close-up penis photos and trade them in for a more flattering one.

## 4. SEXTING AND THE EX

Sexting while casually dating or in a relationship can lead to projections flying around. You begin to project what you want onto the other person. “If you're looking for a good guy,” Walfish said, “you project and put that onto the person, but you haven't given them enough time for their character and morals to show up.” A range of emotions run through you as you begin to think you've sexted too soon, and now you want out of that

relationship. Now you've given your now-ex a bargaining chip over you.

Several of Walfish's patients have encountered the dangers of sexting, including a handful of guys who have regretted it. "A hot, sexy male celebrity who was in couple's therapy with me, (unmarried but in a long-term committed relationship with a woman) had a former girlfriend put a sext nude photo online he had sent her in their former relationship," she said. It went viral everywhere and caused turbulence in his current relationship.

The worst in human nature comes out when a person is rejected, and that means your naughty sexts could eventually go public, so keep that in mind.

## 5. WHEN SEXTING BECOMES SEXUAL HARASSMENT

People who distribute sexting photos of minors electronically can face dire consequences in the states of California and Illinois. Under California law, individuals who distribute, possess, or produce a sexually explicit image of a minor could be charged under the State's child pornography statutes. However, in Illinois, minors who distribute nudes of other minors acquired from sexting will be taken into custody by law enforcement officers and are subject to adjudication or supervision. They will not be charged with child pornography.

Moreover, a common but sometimes silenced form of sexting sexual harassment is when he or she keeps receiving texts from someone they have no interest in. Sexting can become a deal breaker for the person who is receiving and not wanting them. If you find yourself in such a predicament, a gentle but effective way to say it is "I'm not comfortable proceeding down this path. Let's cool it with the sexting," Walfish said.

If it continues it's best to immediately delete that person from all social media. If you don't then you're becoming a willing participant. A single unsolicited text, like a single unsolicited gesture, can be considered harassment. Masini's advice is "if you're under 21, don't sext."

Sexual harassment and deranged exes aside, though, sexting in relationships can be

positive. Whether you sext or not, remember, “when there’s trust in a relationship, privacy is preserved,” Masini said, and “that always creates intimacy that leads to better sex.”

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