

# Common myths (and the truth)



**Myth:** Asking for consent kills the mood.

**Fact:** This could not be further from the truth! Practising consent and checking in builds trust and deepens connections — which can only make everything way better.



**Myth:** If someone consents to making out, they should be keen to have sex later.

**Fact:** Consent is specific and ongoing. This means if someone agrees to one thing, it doesn't mean they're agreeing to everything. Consent is not a one time contract, and both you and the other person have the right to stop at any time.



**Myth:** If you're in a relationship, you don't need to ask for consent.

**Fact:** Consent in long-term relationships is just as important as in new encounters. Regular check-ins are essential to make sure everyone feels valued, comfortable and respected. No one ever owes you sex, and you never owe sex to anyone.



**Myth:** "If they didn't say "no" or resist, it means it was consensual.

**Fact:** Consent isn't just the absence of a "no"; it is the presence of a clear, ongoing "yes". Some people freeze or fawn during an assault as a survival response, meaning they may still go along with it, or act friendly afterwards to stay safe. That does not mean they had consented.

## Support and more resources

TEACH US CONSENT  
Youth-led resources

[teachusconsent.com](https://teachusconsent.com)

1800FULLSTOP  
24/7 trauma specialist counselling

1800 385 578

1800 RESPECT  
24/7 national support line

1800 737 732

Rainbow Sexual Domestic &  
Family Violence Helpline

1800 497 212



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# Get confident with consent

Understanding consent can help stop  
sexual violence before it happens.

Start here with this resource from  
**Teach Us Consent** to help you  
confidently put it into practice.

# Consent 101

Consent means saying “yes” freely, clearly and genuinely. It’s about respect and communication in all relationships – romantic, sexual or otherwise. When we talk about consent in relationships, we’re talking about making sure everyone involved feels safe, respected and listened to.

## For consent to be true, it must be:



### **Affirmative and communicated:**

Sexual partners need to actively say or do something to check for consent. Assuming that someone’s into it because they’re not resisting, pulling away, or saying “no” isn’t good enough. This communication can be verbal and non-verbal.



### **Specific and informed:**

Everyone involved should fully understand what they are consenting to, including whether or not contraception will be used.



### **Free and voluntary:**

Consent should be given without pressure, manipulation, or influence from others. If someone doesn’t feel safe or comfortable to say “no,” that’s not true consent.



### **Ongoing and mutual:**

Anyone can change their mind anytime. Saying yes to one thing (kissing) doesn’t mean saying yes to other things (like sex).



### **Reflective of capacity:**

A person needs to be conscious, sober enough to make decisions, and old enough to legally consent. If someone’s drunk, slurring their words, or stumbling, don’t try anything.

## What does the law say about age?

**The legal age of consent in NSW is 16.** This means people aged 16 or older can legally agree to sexual activity - as long as it’s consensual and there is no pressure, coercion or exploitation.

If one person is in a position of power or trust, such as a teacher, coach or support worker, there are additional laws in place. Relationships in those contexts can still be illegal even if someone is over the age of 16.

**There is an exception to the legal age of consent for people who are close in age.**

If both people are aged between 14 and 16, and the age gap is 2 years or less (for instance, two 15 year olds), it may not be considered a crime.

## Boundaries

Boundaries are ways to communicate what you’re comfortable with, how you want to be treated, and what you are and aren’t willing to participate in. Boundaries are not rules about what you do and don’t want other people to do.

When it comes to intimacy, boundaries can sound like:

- “I’ll only sleep with people who use condoms”
- “I’d love to make out but I’m not keen to go any further tonight”

## What does consent look & sound like?

Consent isn’t just the absence of a “no”, it’s the presence of a clear and genuine “yes.” This can sound like:

- “Yes, I’d love to!”
- “That feels good, keep going”
- “I’d like to try that”

You might also notice non-verbal signs of consent, like relaxed body language or active participation.

Pay attention to people’s body language and check in regularly, especially if things are progressing:

- “Still good?”
- “Want to keep going or pause?”
- “Do you want to tell me what you like?”

## Recognising non-consent

It’s equally important to know the signs that someone is not into it. This can sound like:

- “I’m not sure,”
- “Maybe”
- “I guess, if you want to”
- “I don’t feel comfortable”

People also can also show this through body language - freezing, pulling away, avoiding eye contact, or looking distressed or uncomfortable.

Visit [teachusconsent.com](https://teachusconsent.com) for podcasts, TikToks, articles & YouTube videos on consent & relationships.





# How to have the conversation

You don't need to have all the answers, just a willingness to talk. Start or continue the conversation with questions like:

"What does a respectful relationship look like to you?"

"What would you do if you felt uncomfortable in a situation?"

"How do you know when you're ready to do something in a relationship?"

"What would make it easier for you to say no to something you don't want?"

"Have you seen examples of healthy or unhealthy relationships in the media?"

"Is there anything you want to talk to me about or any questions you have?"

Sometimes it can be daunting as a parent or caregiver to open up the conversation if you think you may not have all the answers yourself. There's absolutely nothing wrong with saying: *"That's a great question that I don't know the answer to, why don't we find out together?"*

Conversations like these help young people think critically about relationships, emotional readiness, and how to stand up for their boundaries while respecting others' too.

## Support and more resources

Teach Us Consent — youth-led resources and education

[teachusconsent.com](https://teachusconsent.com)

Rainbow Sexual Domestic & Family Violence Helpline

1800 497 212

1800 RESPECT —  
24/7 national support line

1800 737 732

Consent Laid Bare by  
Chanel Contos

A book to equip all young people with the capacity to truly consent, create safe and respectful relationships and practice empathy.



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# Teaching young people about sexual consent

Teaching consent, respect and empathy can help stop sexual violence before it happens.

Start here with this resource from **Teach Us Consent** to help you better understand consent, and have confident conversations about it with young people.

# What to know and how to speak about it

Educating young people about consent is vital to help them develop into respectful and responsible adults. As parents, guardians and educators, you play a crucial role in shaping their understandings of consent, helping them establish healthy boundaries and encouraging them to foster respectful relationships.

## What is consent?

Consent means giving free and informed agreement to something — it's about mutual respect, communication, and safety. When it comes to relationships and sexual activity, consent isn't a simple "yes" or "no". It is a conversation that should be ongoing, honest, and free from pressure.

In NSW, the legal age of sexual consent is 16. There is an exception to the legal age of consent for young people who are close in age. If both people are aged between 14 and 16, and the age gap is 2 years or less (for instance, two 15 year olds), it may not be considered a crime.

## Power imbalances

It's also important to know that a young person can never legally consent to abuse, or to a sexual relationship with someone in a position of authority (like a teacher, coach, or support worker).

Power imbalances, whether due to age, authority or dependency, can compromise a young person's ability to give free and informed consent. This is due to the differing stages of life, and positions of power and powerlessness held by each person.

Recognising these dynamics is crucial to support young people's right to autonomy and safety.

## Key principles to know and teach

- \* **Affirmative and communicated:** Sexual partners need to actively say or do something to check for consent. The absence of a "no" does not equal consent.
- \* **Specific and informed:** Everyone involved should fully understand what they are consenting to, including whether or not contraception will be used.
- \* **Free and voluntary:** Consent should be given without pressure, manipulation, or influence from others.
- \* **Ongoing and mutual:** Anyone can change their mind anytime. Saying yes to one thing (kissing) doesn't mean saying yes to other things (like sex).
- \* **Reflective of capacity:** A person needs to be conscious, sober enough to make decisions, and old enough to legally consent.

## Practical tips

- \* **Lead by example:** Show respect for boundaries in your own interactions with young people in your life and others.
- \* **Normalise asking and checking:** Reinforce that checking in and asking for consent is part of caring for someone.
- \* **Make it ongoing:** These aren't one-off talks. Keep returning to the topic as your child or student grows.
- \* **Be inclusive:** Talk about consent in ways that affirm the experiences of all genders, sexualities, and cultural backgrounds.
- \* **Keep it age-appropriate:** Start with simple concepts early (like body autonomy and saying no), and build on them as children mature.
- \* **Chat in the car on the way somewhere:** A safe private space with an end time and where young people can avoid eye contact if they feel shy about the topic.
- \* **Don't be scared to do your own research first:** many of us didn't receive adequate consent education ourselves, so there's no shame in equipping yourself with language and knowledge before speaking to young people!
- \* **Learn together:** We highly recommend listening to our podcast series on consent, in the car together or even by yourself to start.

## Common myths (and the truth)

**Myth:** Talking about consent or sex will encourage young people to be sexually active.

**Fact:** Evidence shows that open, age-appropriate conversations actually help young people make safer, more respectful decisions that can delay the frequency and age they engage in sexual activity as it can prevent being pressured into acts they're not ready for.

**Myth:** I need to know everything about sex, relationships and consent before I talk to my children about it.

**Fact:** You don't need to know everything — just be open, curious, and ready to learn with your child.

**Myth:** Consent isn't as important or doesn't matter if you're in a long-term relationship.

**Fact:** Consent is ongoing and matters every single time — no matter how long you've been with someone. You never owe anyone sex, and no one ever owes you sex.

**Myth:** I don't need to have this conversation with my child yet because they are not sexually active.

**Fact:** Speaking to children about consent for the first time should happen long before they're in a position where sexual consent is relevant to them.

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