

from: **Kristen - Defend Young Minds** <hello@defendyoungminds.com> [via](#) n.convertkit.com  
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Hello,

Our parent challenge theme this year has focused on SEX—what we need to teach children *now* so they can enjoy healthy sexual intimacy as adults in the *future*.

We've covered these topics:

- Importance of teaching kids about sex in healthy, age-appropriate ways
- Body safety skills
- Comfortable ways to talk with your kids about sex
- Books that help you start the conversation
- How to reduce anxiety and depression in kids by being open with them about tough topics
- What your child should know about sex by age 7
- Sexual integrity—how to define it for yourself and your family
- Puberty
- Teaching a healthy body image
- Will-power/self-discipline in sexual behavior

**Did you miss any of these challenges or just want them all in one place?**

Download [this file](#) containing *all* of our 2021 challenges!

# Age Recommendations for Sex Talk Topics

In our final parent challenge on sex, we're giving you recommendations on which topics to cover at each age.

## Babies/Toddlers (Ages 0-2)

- **Correct names** for all body parts (even penis and vagina).
- **Functions** of basic body parts—we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, etc. There's no need to explain the functions of genitals at this point, but emphasizing that all our body parts have a function lays the groundwork for explaining sex in the future.
- **Basic hygiene** and the importance of taking good care of our bodies.

This lets kids know it's ok to talk with their parents about body parts and helps them to better identify those parts for health or injury. See our February Parent Challenge for more info.

## Preschoolers (Ages 3-5)

All of the above, PLUS

- **The difference between good touches and bad touches.** Here's a book we love to help introduce this topic: [\*I Said No! A Kid to Kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private\*](#) by Kimberly King. See our February Parent Challenge for more info.
- **Model consent**--if they ask not to be tickled, comply. If they don't want to hug someone, don't force it. Help them understand they need to respect others in the same way. See our October Parent Challenge for more info.
- **Privacy**--this is the age they need to learn that we do some things in private--like showering, using the bathroom, dressing, etc. (*aside from when they need help from someone older to accomplish these tasks*). Also that we only touch our private parts in private (to clean, etc.)--see [this article](#) for more. They need to respect others' privacy as well.
- **Model positive body image** in the way you speak about and treat *your own body* as well as theirs. See [this article](#) for more information as well as our September Parent Challenge.
- **Explain nudity** and when and where nudity is appropriate.

- **If they ask where babies come from**, give a simple but truthful answer at the level your child can understand. For help with this explanation, [see our book list](#) for children’s books you can read with your child to introduce the topic. See also our March, April, and June parent challenges.
- **Similarities and differences in bodies** (we all have nipples, but we don’t all have vaginas).
- **How some pictures are good and some are not**--and what they should do if they see a bad picture. Not only will this help them if they are exposed to pornography, but it also protects them from child predators who often use pornography to groom children. My book, [Good Pictures Bad Pictures Jr.: A Simple Plan to Protect Young Minds](#), helps parents introduce this topic in an age appropriate way.

## **Big Kids (ages 6-8)**

All of the above, PLUS

- **More advanced talks about pornography**--including an age-appropriate definition, how it is harmful, and a plan of action for rejecting it when they are exposed. Not sure where to start? We have three resources for this age group:
  - **Course:** [Brain Defense: Digital Safety](#): A fun and easy way to teach your kids ages 8-12 the digital defense skills they need to stay safe online.
  - **Book:** [Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today’s Young Kids](#)
  - **Guide:** [How to Talk to Kids About Pornography: Quick Start Guide](#)
- **To prepare yourself for when (not if) your child is exposed to pornography**, our guidebook [My Kid Saw Porn—Now What? A SMART Plan for Parents](#) will give you a reassuring, step-by-step plan, plus tons of guidance from experts.
- **Body safety skills** and how to recognize when someone might be **grooming** them either online or offline. Make sure they understand they shouldn’t give personal information (name, age, address, phone number) to strangers online and they should never meet up with them. For more information, see [this article](#) and our guide [How to Protect Kids from Sexual Abuse: Body Safety Toolkit](#). See also our February parent challenge.

- **More detailed description of the mechanics of sex.** Again, [this list of books](#) can help you approach the topic. See also our March, April and June parent challenges and [this article](#).
- **Begin discussing puberty** as children approach the age of 8. Prepare them for the fact that their bodies are getting ready to change to become an adult. See our August parent challenge for more resources on discussing puberty.
- **Gender and sexual identities**--your kids may start to come across these topics at this age. Be open for discussion and teach them to treat others with respect. This helps establish that you are safe to discuss sensitive topics with. Listen to [my interview with Dr. Christy Kane](#) for more tips.

## **Tweens (ages 9-12)**

All of the above, PLUS

- **Discuss stereotypes/sexism** and the need for mutual respect.
- **Begin discussing harassment**--what it is and how it's not appropriate, what your child should do if they are harassed.
- **Discuss [body safety skills](#)** with them again to protect them from abuse. See our February parent challenge for more tips!
- **Engage in more discussion about puberty**--what they can expect to happen and what is happening to their bodies and emotions. See also our August parent challenge.
- **Continue with more detailed discussion about sex with more emphasis on the emotional, mental, spiritual side** and *when* it's appropriate. Share your definition of [sexual integrity](#). Our July Parent Challenge has more information on this topic.
- **Reassure them that you're available and comfortable** with their questions and that the internet isn't a safe or completely accurate place to learn about puberty, sex, etc.
- **Continue to discuss [gender and sexual identities](#)**--continuing to reinforce that you are a safe person with whom to discuss this topic.
- **Share your guidance on sexual self-discipline and masturbation**--your thoughts and standards. See [this article](#) for tips on this subject and our October Parent Challenge.
- **Continue to discuss pornography**--our course, books and guides make it easy:

- **Course:** [Brain Defense: Digital Safety](#): Teach your kids ages 8-12 the skills they need to stay safe online!
- **Book:** [Good Pictures Bad Pictures: Porn-Proofing Today's Young Kids](#)
- **Guide:** [How to Talk to Kids About Pornography: Quick Start Guide](#)
- **To prepare yourself for when (not if) your child is exposed to pornography**, our guidebook [My Kid Saw Porn—Now What? A SMART Plan for Parents](#) will provide you with valuable resources to help you navigate this with your child.
- **Talk directly about *not* sharing nudes with others.** This may seem like something our kids would know, but you need to talk about it! See [this article](#) for more information.
- **Teach healthy body image habits.** As children's bodies start to change, this is an *especially* important time model a **healthy body image**. We recommend parents read [More Than a Body](#) by Drs. Lexie and Lindsay Kite for a better understanding of how to approach this topic, especially with girls. (*And watch for our interview with Dr. Lexie Kite early next year!*) See also our September Parent Challenge.

## Teens (ages 13+)

All of the above, PLUS

- **Share further details about sex with strong emphasis on the emotional, mental, and spiritual side** in addition to the physical side. Elicit questions—have private time set aside to discuss their questions. Do you have difficulty with this topic? See [this article](#) and our November Parent Challenge.
- **Continue to share your definition of [sexual integrity](#)**—including where you stand in regards to masturbation and when its appropriate to have sex. See our July Parent Challenge for more info on this topic.
- **Reiterate the importance of consent** for all physical contact, as well as defining **sexual harassment**--both to protect your child from harassment from others as well as preventing them from being the one to harass others.
- **Teach them the differences between healthy and harmful relationships** and red flags to watch out for when dating.
- **Continue discussing [gender and sexual identities](#).**
- **Expand the discussion on pornography and [sharing nudes](#).** Help them understand that [pornography does not reflect real or healthy](#)

[relationships](#). Emphasize the harmful effects of pornography to themselves, others and society. [This video](#) by Fight the New Drug is a great resource to illustrate these harms.

- **To prepare for when (not if) your child is exposed to pornography**, our guidebook [My Kid Saw Porn—Now What? A SMART Plan for Parents](#) has step by step strategies for helping you navigate this with your child. Also, be sure to check out [Fortify](#)—a pornography recovery program that’s FREE for teens!

This concludes our 2021 annual parent challenge on teaching kids healthy attitudes towards sex. Many of you have told us how helpful this year’s topic was, but we’d love to hear more. Just hit reply!

Kindly,

Kristen

*P.S. What’s our new Parent Challenge topic for 2022? Be sure to watch your email in January for our announcement AND the opportunity to win an exciting prize!*