


A GUIDE TO CONSENT



THEINITIATIVEFOREQUALRIGHTS.ORG



**There are many ways people get together,
from casual hookups to long-term relationships.**

**Whatever the circumstances, consent is a normal
and necessary part of sex.**

CONSENT

When someone gives consent, they're giving permission for something to happen or agreeing to do something.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Everyone should get to make choices about what they do with their body. Think about how your actions might make someone feel and ask first so they have a choice.

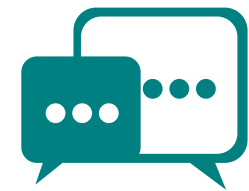
WHEN TO ASK FOR CONSENT

Always ask before any type of touch and before escalating things. Checking in early on — like before holding hands — builds a foundation of trust and open communication

BEFORE YOU ASK

KNOW WHY YOU'RE ASKING

Asking for consent is about more than getting a yes or no. It's about opening up a conversation with your partner about what you both want. These conversations show your partner that you respect them and won't make them do anything they don't want to.



HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT SEX IN NON-SEXUAL SITUATIONS

Don't wait until you're in the heat of the moment to bring up sex. You can talk about things like protection, previous experiences, preferences, and more through texts or in casual settings.



CONSIDER IF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL COULD AFFECT THE SITUATION

If you have taken drugs or alcohol, ask yourself if you're in a clear enough state to respect someone's boundaries.



WHEN YOU ASK

ASK WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS OF HOW YOUR PARTNER WILL RESPOND

When you ask, make it clear from your words, tone, and body language that you're OK with the answer, no matter what it is.

PAY ATTENTION TO BODY LANGUAGE AND VERBAL CUES

Sometimes your partner might not feel comfortable directly saying no. Instead, they could say something like "I guess," or even "if you want to," when they actually want to say no but feel pressured.

IF YOU'RE NOT SURE — PLAY IT SAFE

If you aren't sure your partner is into what you're suggesting, err on the side of caution and don't go further. Instead, ask what they want to do or suggest another activity. You can say, "You don't sound too sure — why don't we just watch TV instead?"

RESPONDING TO THEIR ANSWER

IF THEY SAY YES

If your partner enthusiastically agrees and appears excited, you can move forward. Continue to check in with them to see if they're enjoying what you're doing.



IF THEY SAY NO

If someone says no, accept their answer. Never try to convince or guilt someone to say yes when they've already said no.



IF YOU'RE BEING ASKED

If someone asks for your consent, they want to know your true feelings. If you're not sure if you can share your true feelings about what is happening, it might be worth thinking about why.



IF YOU SAY NO

If you say no it can be tough to tell someone how you feel, especially if you think it's not what they want to hear — but it shows you respect them and yourself. You can say, “Thanks for asking but I just don't feel that way about you,” “I'm not feeling up to that tonight — maybe we can just cuddle instead,”



IF YOU'RE UNSURE

Maybe you're not sure if you're ready to do what your partner is asking, or if you're in the mood. In these situations, it's best to say no. You both deserve to have an experience that you're 100% excited about. You can say, “I like the sound of that but not right now — I'll let you know how I'm feeling later.”



IF YOU SAY YES

Be specific. Let them know what you're agreeing to and if there are any conditions. You can say, “I'm into that — if you have a condom.”



KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Consent is an ongoing conversation, so continue to let your partner know what you like or don't like. You can also let them know if you'd like to stop or need a break.



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RESOURCE CENTRE: [NSVRC.ORG/SAAM](https://nsvrc.org/saam)