



WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is asking for permission to engage in any sexual activity; it is a voluntary agreement. But consent is also used every day! For example, you wouldn't take someone's pencil, you would ask them first. "*May I please borrow your pencil?*". Their answer, and how they answer you, lets you know if it's ok, or not ok, to have what you're asking for.

CONSENT IS...

Freely Given/ Voluntary. Doing something sexual with someone is a decision that should be made without pressure, force, manipulation, or while intoxicated or high. Pressuring, convincing or repeatedly asking someone until they agree to an activity is coercion, not consent.

Reversible. Anyone can change their mind about what they want to do, at any time. Even if you've done it before or are in the middle of having sex. Partners should check in with each other to ensure that consent is ongoing throughout all activities.

Informed. Be honest. For example, if someone says they'll use a condom and then they don't, that's not consent. Being honest about birth control use and STI's is a part of informed consent too.

Enthusiastic. If someone isn't excited, or really into it, that's not consent. If you ask for consent, and the person is unsure, hesitates, or doesn't respond, this is not consent. Body language is also important; if the person pulls away, is tense, looks uncomfortable etc., then they are not consenting.

Specific/ Ongoing. Saying yes to one thing (like going to the bedroom to make out) doesn't mean they've said yes to others (like oral sex). This is why ongoing consent and checking in with your partner is important.

EXAMPLES ON HOW TO ASK FOR CONSENT:

Is this ok? Do you like this? Can I...? Do you want to...? Can we try this...?

EXAMPLES OF GIVING CONSENT:

Yes! I'd like that. I like this. This is ok. Let's do more of this. This feels good. Oh yeah!

EXAMPLES OF PHRASES THAT MEAN YOUR PARTNER IS NOT CONSENTING:

*I'm not sure. I don't like this. No. Stop. Uhh. Umm. I guess so. I don't know. *Silence**

WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT? Any unwanted touching or penetration of a sexual nature. It does not matter what the *intent* of the touching was, if it was unwanted, it is sexual assault.

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT? Any unwelcomed sexual advances, or requests for sexual favours. Often used as a way of controlling or intimidating someone (threats, sexual comments, remarks about sexual identity, displaying sexist or demeaning photos, stalking, cat calling).

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE? Any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality (sexual assault, sexual harassment).

CONSENT



Freely Given
Reversible
Informed
Enthusiastic
Specific

Planned Parenthood

THE AGE OF CONSENT EXPLAINED

(Source: Ontario Women's Justice Network, 2016)

In Canada, you have to be 16 years old to be able to legally agree to sexual activity. This is called the “age of consent”. Sexual activity includes a range of activity from kissing to sexual intercourse and cannot include any abuse or exploitation. There are some exceptions for youth under 16, but only if the youth are in “peer groups” or “close in age” (see below).

You have to be 18 years old to be able to legally agree to sexual activity that “exploits” – when it involves prostitution, pornography or when sexual activity happens in a relationship of authority, trust or dependency (ex. with a teacher, coach or babysitter).

PEER GROUP EXCEPTIONS

Ages 12 and 13: At 12 and 13-years old, you can consent to sexual activity with another young person who is **less than** two years older than you.

For example, if you are 12 years old, you can legally consent to sexual activity with someone who is between 12-14 years old, no older. If you are 13 years old, you can legally consent to sexual activity with someone who is between 12-15 years old, no older.

Ages 14 and 15: At 14 and 15-years old, you can consent to sexual activity with a partner that is **less than** five years older than you. For example, if you are 14 years old, you can legally consent to sexual activity with someone who is between 12-19 years old, no older.

If you are 15 years old, you can legally consent to sexual activity with someone who is between 13-20 years old, but no older (ex. 20 years old and 3 months).

Ages 16 and 17: If you are 16 or 17, you have reached the age of consent for sexual activity, as long as your partner is at least 14 years old.

These “peer group” exceptions mean that if teens under 16 years old are close in age, they can legally agree to sexual activity with each other, including things like “sexting”. But, if a teenager under 16 is participating in sexual activity with a person who is older than their “peer group/close in age” group, it is considered a criminal offence. It does not matter if the teen gave their permission because the consent is not considered legally valid.

IMPORTANT: There are also certain situations where a youth cannot legally consent to sexual activity. This means that even if a teen gives their permission or says “yes” to sexual activity, the law will not recognize the consent as a valid “yes”:

- In Canada, youth under 12 years old cannot legally consent to sexual activity in any situation.
- A youth under 18 cannot legally consent to sexual activity with someone 18+ where there is a relationship of authority, trust, or dependency (ex. coach, teacher, or family member).
- A youth under 18 cannot legally consent to exploitation such as pornography or prostitution.



ANY SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITHOUT CONSENT, REGARDLESS OF AGE OR RELATIONSHIP STATUS, IS SEXUAL ASSAULT