

What do Children and Young People Think?

Children and young people want to talk to their parents about sex and relationships, but that can be daunting for a parent. One group of 10-16 year olds came up with these helpful pieces of advice for parents:

- Take responsibility for talking to us. Don't just wait for us to ask.
- If we ask you things, always tell the truth. Don't put it off or say 'I'll tell you when you're older.'
- Don't be angry and try not to be embarrassed.
- Don't save it all up for a one-off 'birds and bees' lecture. We'd rather you talked naturally, little and often.
- Wait until we're at home and on our own together to avoid embarrassment.
- Make sure we know what you're talking about and let us ask you questions.
- If we ask what a word means, ask us what we think the word means first.
- Don't laugh at us or spread gossip about what we have been talking about.
- If you don't know something, be honest and say that you don't know.
- Give us books or leaflets, but talk to us too.
- Don't expect school to tell us everything – we want to hear from our parents too.

Useful Contacts

Parentline Plus offers help and advice to parents and carers on any aspect of bringing up children. Download the leaflet 'Parents and Pre-teens'
0808 800 2222

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

For information about your rights and SRE

www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1

For further guidance from the Sex Education Forum, download

['Talk to your children about sex and relationships: support for parents'](#)

Factsheet 31 from www.ncb.org.uk/sef

Talking to Children about Sex and Relationships

Support and Information for Primary School Families

In school we aim to help children to learn to respect themselves and others and move safely from childhood, through adolescence, into adulthood. As part of this work, we deliver an ongoing programme of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE). This programme begins as soon children arrive in school and continues until the end of secondary school. There is more information on our programme later.

We are very aware that the SRE we deliver in school is only a small part of children's learning about their bodies, emotions, relationships, sexual behaviour, sexuality, sexual health and themselves. The majority of children's learning, in this area, takes place at home.

We hope this leaflet gives you some more information about our partnership in teaching children knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to SRE.

Why should parents and carers talk to their children about Sex and Relationships?

- Children tell us they want their parents to be the first ones to talk to them about puberty, sex and relationships.
- If families start talking to their children about puberty, sex and relationships they are less likely to get ideas that worry or confuse them and they learn that it's alright to talk about these things at home and to ask questions.
- Children learn most about values and relationships from family experiences. Close, loving relationships are the best way of showing a young person how your family 'does things' based on your values, culture, faith and beliefs.
- If families talk about sex and relationships openly and honestly, young people are:
 - more prepared for puberty and the changes they experience
 - more likely to resist pressure to have unwanted sex
 - more likely to delay having sex for the first time
 - more likely to use contraception if they do have sex
 - less likely to have an unplanned pregnancy or to get a sexually transmitted infection.

What do Children Learn About in SRE in School?

	Question children will consider	Content areas
Age3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I be a good friend? • What do I feel and how can I tell other people? • When can I help myself and when should I ask for help? • What can my body do and what is it good at? • What does my body look like? • What do I need to do to keep clean and healthy? • When should I say 'No' and how should I say it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibilities for myself and my possessions • Care and consideration • Being a good friend • Identifying and expressing my own feelings • Saying 'No'
Age 5-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is special to me and why? • What are my friends like and how are we different? • What are the different emotions I might feel? • Who can I share my emotions with? • What can I do to look after my body? • How is my body special? • How do babies change and grow? • What are the names of the main parts of the body? • What are my responsibilities now I'm older? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and Co-operation • Value individuality • Simple decision-making • Valuing difference • Keeping clean • External parts of the body • Valuing body's uniqueness • Babies to children to adults • Changing responsibilities
Age7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can I do when friendships go wrong? • How do people live their lives differently to me? • Why is it important to stay clean? • How do parents care for babies? • What can I do for myself to keep clean and healthy? • How are males and females different and what are the different parts called? • What does it mean to be grown up? • What am I responsible for now and how will this change? • How do my actions and emotions affect the way others feel? • Who can I talk to about the way I feel? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Friendships • Awareness of different lifestyles and beliefs • Responsibilities for hygiene • Difference between males and females • Being 'grown up' • Communicating emotions • Impact of emotions • Range of people to share emotions with

Age9-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What qualities do I value in people I know and my role models? • What practical methods can I use to maintain and improve my relationships? • What sort of relationships do I have and how have they changed? • What does it mean to respect others, especially others' lifestyles and beliefs? • What happens to the bodies of boys and girls when they reach puberty? • Does everyone change at the same rate? • How are babies made? • How can I keep my growing and changing body clean? • How can I stop germs spreading? • How can I express my feelings positively as I grow up? • What should adults think about before they have a baby? • Why are love and trust important? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of personality • Influences and pressures • Respecting difference • Changing hygiene routines • Puberty • Human lifecycle • Changing emotions • Love and marriage • Lifestyles choices
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How can I talk to my child about Sex and Relationships?

- Read a book, leaflet or watch a video with your child.
- Talk while you're doing something else –washing up, driving.
- Enjoy talking. Laugh with each other, not at each other –it can reduce embarrassment and stress.
- Listen rather than judge. Ask them what they think.
- Answer questions and don't be afraid to say you don't know.
- Have a phrase ready for awkward moments – 'That's a good question. Let's talk about it when we get home.'
- Always respond. Give the message it's good to talk about sex and relationships.
- If it feels too personal, talk about people in books, films or soaps.

What can I say?

Get ideas about what to say from a book like 'Questions Children Ask' by Miriam Stoppard, or 'Let's Talk about Where Babies Come From' by Robbie Harris.