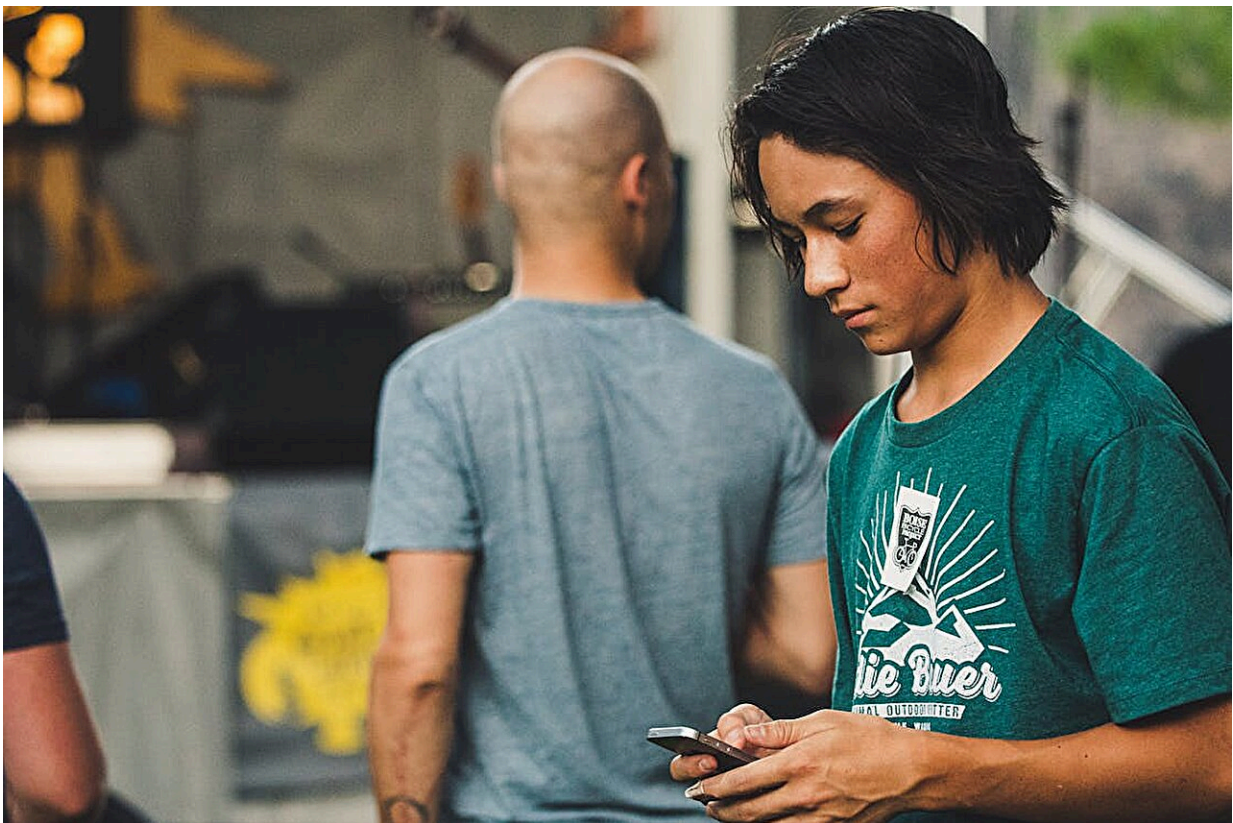


# Wondering how to teach your kids about consent? Here's an age-based guide to get you started

May 29 2024, by Giselle Natassia Woodley and Jacqueline Hendriks

---



Credit: [Brett Sayles/Pexels](#)

The Australian government's new campaign [Consent Can't Wait](#) challenges us all to improve our understanding of consent. It asks a series of questions to illustrate this issue is [more complex](#) than simplistic "no means no" messaging.

The campaign invites viewers to consider the nuances of consent, so we can raise these important issues with [children and young people](#) in our lives.

But what is a good age to start talking about consent? How do parents tackle such conversations when this information probably wasn't readily discussed in our own upbringing?

## **How it starts—early childhood (0–5 years)**

Small [on-going conversations](#) about consent that start early are best. At this age, children are becoming aware of their bodies, and this is a great [time to start](#) basic conversations around [consent](#), [body safety](#) and boundaries.

If you're tickling or rough-housing with your child and they ask you to stop, respect this. Similarly, you want your child to learn that [they should listen to and respect](#) the feelings of others.

We should also [not force a child to give a hug or a kiss](#) to a family member if they don't feel comfortable. Teaching them to be polite and respectful without having to cross their own personal boundaries is key.

Bath time can also be a great setting to discuss how children's bodies are [their own](#) and the basics of [boundaries and privacy](#).

## Childhood and primary school (6–11 years)

As children enter school, their social networks start to expand and the potential for conflict is inevitable. As parents, we can help them to [navigate this time](#) and unpack more developed ideas around consent.

The focus at this stage should be to ensure young people have the necessary skills to [form healthy friendships](#) and to engage respectfully with others. You may also want your child to recognize the [diversity](#) and difference that exists in our society.

It's important your child starts to learn about [verbal](#) and [non-verbal communication](#). Body language can provide great insight into how another person might be feeling, and children can learn how to tune in and respect others as much as possible.

As your child starts to form a [stronger personal identity](#), help them identify and maintain their own personal boundaries. [Demonstrating how to respond](#) if someone is behaving or touching them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable helps develop skills to [communicate boundaries](#)

.

Finally, remember that young people begin to connect in online spaces too. Encourage your child to think critically about [what they see online and who they talk to](#). Teaching children to [engage respectfully](#) can assist with [consensual experiences online](#) too.

## Adolescence and secondary school (12–18 years)

As we transition through the adolescent years, those foundations skills that first applied to relationships with friends and family, [extend to romantic relationships](#), where consent is important for [respectful, safe](#)

[and healthy experiences.](#)

If they haven't already grasped the notion, it's important for adolescents to understand that [consent can be withdrawn](#). People have the right to [change their mind at any time](#), even if it might be an activity they had previously agreed to.

Navigating [sexual consent](#) can be more complex than [seeking and giving permission](#). Consent must be [voluntary and freely given, without coercion or pressure](#). Just because we are in a romantic relationship with someone, this does not mean we should be expected to engage in particular behaviors if they cross our boundaries.

Adolescents also need to understand that [rejection is inevitable](#). Sometimes people won't want to go on a date with us, to give us a kiss, or to engage in a particular sexual act and that's OK. Encourage [young people](#) to [not take rejection personally](#), respect the wishes and boundaries of others, and be vigilant to [verbal](#) and [non-verbal cues](#).

Adolescents will also start to communicate regularly with peers online and may engage in sexting: [sending intimate images](#) to one another. Teach them to express and [practice consent](#) to be safe online and be [mutually respectful of each other](#).

## **Being accessible and inclusive**

Consent can be complex, particularly for minority populations.

[Yarning Quiet Ways](#) is a resource designed for [First Nations families](#).

The Sexuality Education Counseling and Consultancy Agency (SECCA) [offers resources](#) suitable for helping to navigate discussions with [people with disability](#) or people who require resources written in simple English.

The Rainbow Project has [resources](#) about consent for LGBTQI+ people.

## Final tips for families

[Start the conversations early](#) focusing on [basic ethics](#), [rights](#) and bodily autonomy. Consent conversations can build in an age-appropriate way and [extend to discussions about sexual relationships](#) as children age.

While discussions should be age-appropriate where possible, it may be relevant to [introduce certain topics earlier](#) if need be too.

Communication about consent is best when it's direct, free from judgment and maintains an open-dialogue. These discussions [might feel awkward](#) or uncomfortable but they are important. Homes are [critical places for these discussions](#) and it is important that your child sees you as an approachable and askable parent.

Education around consent won't stop [sexual violence](#) on it's own, so it's important to have these discussions alongside other areas of importance.

Discussions around challenging gender stereotypes, modeling respect and how to intervene, [the importance of empathy](#), as well as online safety such as [sexting and pornography](#) can assist.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Wondering how to teach your kids about consent? Here's an age-based guide to get you started (2024, May 29) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-05-kids-consent-age-based.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.