

U Choose to Know

When Is the Right Time to Engage in Sexual Activity?



In the classroom, students may ask questions like, “How do I know when it is the right time to have sex?” or “How do I know if a certain person is the right one to have sex with?” While it’s important to avoid sharing your personal opinion, there are many ways to help students make these decisions.

Check out the *Are You Ready for Sex?* section of [For Teens: How to Make Healthy Decisions About Sex](#) by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In addition, encourage your students to ask themselves these questions when considering if having sex is right for them:

- » Have we—my partner and me—talked about using condoms to prevent STIs and HIV, and do I feel good about that talk?
- » Have we gotten contraception to protect against pregnancy, if needed?
- » Do I feel able to say “no” at any point if I change my mind?
- » Would I feel comfortable getting tested and/or treated for an STI and talking with my partner about this?
- » Am I prepared to handle the possibility (even if it’s small) that we could experience a pregnancy or STI?

If a student answers yes to the above questions, then they may be at a good place to decide to have sex...or, they may STILL decide that they would rather wait. However, if they answer yes to the following questions, it may not be the right time:

- » Do I feel under pressure from anyone, such as my partner or friends?
- » Is having sex now, or with this partner, in conflict with my values?
- » Could I have any confusing feelings afterwards?
- » Am I thinking about having sex just to impress my friends or keep up with them?
- » Am I thinking about having sex just to keep my partner?

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Encourage students to remember the following when making their decision:

1

Have sex when you feel ready, and only when you're ready. Making the decision to have sex or engage in any sexual behaviors is your choice. Remind students to listen to their instincts and not the pressures of peers, social media, partners, or friends.

2

It's okay to change your mind. If you initially thought you were ready but change your mind later, that's okay. Emphasize to students that it is even okay to change their mind after sexual intercourse has begun.

3

Take your feelings of uncertainty as "not now." Think of it this way: if you choose to have sex when you're unsure, you may feel confusing feelings about it later because you really weren't ready. And if you choose to say, "I'll wait until this uncertainty turns to a yes!," you give yourself a better chance of doing what will make you happy in the long run.

4

Make sure every person engaging in the sexual activity consents. Encourage students to ask direct questions to their partner such as, "Can I touch you here?" or "Do I have your permission to take this further?" and make sure that they receive a verbal yes from their partner.

There are so many factors to consider when deciding whether or not to have sex. We must remember that even when we provide youth with information about making that decision, **it is ultimately theirs to make.**



Here are some additional resources:

[For Teens: How to Make Healthy Decisions about Sex](#): This resource discusses how youth can determine when sex is right for them. Some of the talking points include: relationship readiness to have sex, the benefits of waiting, STI and pregnancy prevention, and condom facts.

[Helping Parents Give "The Talk"](#): Dr. Jennifer Salerno gives some helpful tips on how to talk to youth about sex. This resource can be given to a student's concerned parent or even for your use if the conversation comes up between you and a student.



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