

# First time having sex? Are you ready?

A guide to help you explore  
whether or not you feel ready  
for your first **sexual encounter**

# Are you ready?

Here are some prompts to help you further explore if you are really ready for your first sexual encounter, guiding you through considerations to support your emotional and physical wellbeing. It reflects on topics like consent, emotional comfort, and safety precautions such as STI testing and contraception, to help increase the likelihood of a respectful and positive experience.

**The legal age of sex in the UK is 16**, this is because this is the minimum age that is deemed someone might be physically and emotionally ready to have sex. That doesn't mean that if you are 16 you should be sexually active, most people wait until they are older to have sex. If someone is under 16 and having sex, they can still access confidential sexual health services by calling [0300 003 1212](tel:03000031212) or visiting [eshs.org.uk](http://eshs.org.uk)

## Do you feel comfortable around the person you are thinking about being intimate with?

If you don't feel comfortable to be yourself around the person, it's probably not a good idea to have sex with them. Sex is meant to be an enjoyable experience, but you are less likely to enjoy yourself if you feel something is off. You should feel confident to tell the person if you change your mind, or if you are not enjoying something. Spending more time getting to know them first, until you both feel comfortable to move your relationship to the next stage, is always a better option than rushing.

## Have you shown each other affection in other ways, for example cuddling and kissing?

There is no rush to have sex – there are lots of other ways you can show each other affection and progress / develop your relationship. These can be in the forms of kissing, cuddling, holding hands and lots more, before you choose to have sex.

## Do you feel ready, and do you feel you want to have sex with them (without persuasion, manipulation or pressure)?

If someone is pressuring, persuading, blackmailing or manipulating you to have sex, then this is not true consent and is classed as a sexual offence. It is your body, and you have the right to say no. To find out more about consent, visit [eshs.org.uk/sexual-wellbeing](http://eshs.org.uk/sexual-wellbeing) Or if you think you have been victim to a sexual assault you can seek support at [eshs.org.uk/sexual-assault](http://eshs.org.uk/sexual-assault)

## Do you feel you could say no if you wanted to?

If you are worried about the consequences of saying no, then this could be a red flag. There could be a power imbalance (where one person in the relationship has a greater power, influence or control) between you both. A sexual partner should respect your decision and never try to change your mind.

## Have you discussed what you are both looking for? Is it one off hook up or long-term relationship? Have you spoken about whether you are or plan to be sexually active with other people and do you feel happy with each other's responses?

It is always a good idea to have these conversations before you have sex to ensure that you both want the same things, and you are less likely to feel regret or disappointment after.

## Have you discussed having sex and agreed it is something you both want to do? Have you discussed contraception, STI testing, pregnancy risk (depending on the type of sex), and the type of sex you're happy to have?

Having sex comes with risks, and it is both people's responsibility to put steps in place to prevent the likelihood of these risks occurring.

This can include things like barrier protection ([eshs.org.uk/condoms](http://eshs.org.uk/condoms)) and contraception if there is a pregnancy risk ([eshs.org.uk/emergency](http://eshs.org.uk/emergency)).

It is also important to talk about the type of sex (oral, penetrative etc) you're happy to have, to make sure everyone is consenting to each act and feels confident enough to say no if uncomfortable.



Remember, even if you have **communicated well**,  
there is still **no rush**.

Having an intimate relationship is a big step, and things might not always go as planned, so it's important that you have someone outside of the relationships you can talk to for support. It might seem embarrassing talking to parents and carers about this subject, but having open communication with them too means that you have a good support network if you need it. If you don't feel comfortable talking to parents and carers, you can always reach out to ESHS on **0300 003 1212**

**Remember**, you can **change your mind at any time**, and **so can your partner**, so make sure you are **checking in** with each other and **communicating effectively**, if you do decide to have sex.



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