

Consent is FIRES 🔥 🔥

Freely given

- Consent must be given freely, not under pressure, threat, manipulation, sense of obligation, or unequal power dynamics.
- A person can't consent if they're asleep or unconscious, drunk/intoxicated/altered state, a child, or otherwise unable to make responsible decisions.

Informed

- If someone doesn't know about the risk factors or expectations involved in the activity (e.g. STI status, birth control, other partners, implications...), they can't consent.
- Be honest about anything *you* would want to know about *your* partners (or, of course, anything your partner wants/would want to know).

Reversible/Revocable

- Consent can be withdrawn or changed at any time. The moment someone says something like "stop," "wait," "no," or a safeword, stops responding, withdraws, or looks or sounds uncomfortable, stop immediately and check in.

Enthusiastic

- Consent must be affirmative: saying yes, not just *not* saying no. Silence and being passive are not consent. If someone doesn't respond to your request, that's a no.
- In fact, the most dangerous situation is when you're not getting any response at all—this could indicate the person is scared or experiencing a trauma response. The best thing to do in this situation is stop and check in.

Specific

- Unless you've agreed otherwise, consent must be given before an activity begins.
- Consenting to one activity does not imply consent to any other activity.
- Consenting to an activity once does not imply consent to the same activity in the future.
- Dressing, acting or talking sexy does not imply consent to being touched in any way.
- Err on the side of over-communicating.

Practical Tips

- **Desire makes it sexy:** Instead of asking “Is this okay?” or “Can I...?” try desire-oriented language like “Does this feel good?” or “If you’re into it, I would *love* to....” Even better, use open-ended questions like “What would feel good right now?” “How do you like to be touched?” or “What would make this feel even better?”
- **Be easy to say no to:** When someone declines a request, say “Thank you for saying no,” or “Thank you for taking care of yourself.” Don’t argue, pout, or pressure them. If they can trust you to respect their no, they’re more likely to say yes!
- **Talk about how to communicate:** For some people, words can be stressful and break the flow in the moment, while for others the specificity of words creates safety. Nonverbal communication can be a perfectly clear and effective way to practice consent when everyone is comfortable with it. Early on when you’re with someone new and you think things might get sexy, try asking a question like “How do you like to communicate consent?” or “When you’re getting it on, do you like verbal check-ins?” This goes a long way in preventing misunderstandings, and it can remove a lot of the stress of not knowing if you’re checking in often enough or in the right ways.
- **Check in more often in the beginning:** When you’re with someone new or doing something new, check for consent more often in the early stages. As each person becomes more confident that you are communicating well and respecting each other’s boundaries, you may not need to check in as frequently.
- **Standing consent:** In ongoing relationships, consider making standing consent agreements, where you give general consent for certain kinds of touch without having to ask each time. Examples might be “You can touch me anywhere except my genitals without asking,” “You can hug me anytime, but please ask before touching me with sexual intent,” or even “You can touch me however you want and I’ll let you know if it’s not okay.” To make it sexier, add your preferences, like “I especially like feather-light touch and being bitten.”
- **Share the responsibility:** It’s just as important to communicate clearly and proactively about your boundaries and desires as it is to ask the other person about theirs.
- **Talk about power dynamics:** Every relationship has power imbalances. If they are particularly extreme, such as between employer and employee, strongly consider avoiding any sexual interaction—in such situations genuine consent can be very difficult or impossible. But in any relationship it’s a good idea to get relevant power dynamics out in the open. Ask, too, about each person’s comfort saying no and expressing desires. Experiences of marginalization in society or personal relationships can make both of these hard.
- **Accidents happen:** The aftermath of a consent accident can be a valuable growth experience for all parties and even strengthen a relationship, if handled well.
 - If you were hurt and you believe it was an accident, tell the person how you feel and what you need. See what happens if you assume they want to respect your boundaries and need to know more about how to. Of course, if someone continues crossing your boundaries or doesn’t seem to care about your well-being, get whatever support you need to get out!
 - If you accidentally hurt someone, thank them for telling you, acknowledge their feelings, apologize, and ask what else you can do to support them. Try not to argue or defend your actions—it can make the other person feel wrong for being uncomfortable, and it can cast doubt on your sincerity.
- **If you’re not sure about something, ask!**