



# safe on social

## Sextortion and the danger of accepting Direct Messages



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### **Sextortion and the danger of accepting Direct Message (DM) requests on Instagram.**

Teens are curious, and potential child predators prey on this. Recently we have had several disclosures of sextortion. Young people are being targeted through a direct message request from a stranger on Instagram.

Sextortion is a hybrid of the words 'sexual' and 'extortion.' It is a serious crime that occurs when someone threatens to distribute your private and sensitive material if you don't provide them images of a sexual nature, sexual favours, or money.

Blackmailers often target people through dating apps, social media, webcams, or adult pornography sites. More often, we are seeing teens being targeted through DM's on Instagram.

The most recent case that we referred to the Police was a 16yr old girl that had checked her direct message requests and accepted them (as most teens usually do even though this is very dangerous). A person said, "If you don't send me a nude in 60 secs I will send this image to your friends and say it is you" they sent her a cropped image of a naked young woman laying on a bed.

The 16yr old responded, saying that she would report them. Again they gave her 60secs. She responded with some profanities in an attempt to shut down the conversation. The blackmailer went ahead and sent the image through another DM to three boys that were on her friend's list.

The perpetrator had done their research, and they knew the boys lived in the same town as they played sport together and had commented on a recent post. This is easy to figure out through a public account on Instagram and why setting an Instagram account to private is a must.

The users were blocked but kept coming through under multiple account names. She took screenshots to use as evidence. They were all reported to Instagram and blocked. We notified the Police so that they were aware if the images were shared by other teens who may have believed it was her. They contacted the teens involved who had received the photo and shut the whole situation down very quickly.

## Things you need to discuss:

They should never accept DM requests through Instagram, assure them it will never be a friend (if it is, they will contact through other means). There may be a sinister side, and accepting a DM request is not safe.

Let them know that they can always speak to you without judgment, that you will help them if they make a mistake online, and something goes wrong. They need to know that they should never be afraid to speak up.

Ask them to show you the DM request section (DM's are usually just from their friends, but the DM request section is almost always from strangers) if you are not an Instagram user and ask how they report and block to be assured that they know what to do when things go wrong.

Make sure they know not to pay or respond to the demands at all. They should not engage at all.

Teach them that they should take screenshots if something happens to have evidence if the authorities need to be notified.

If you are in Australia, help your teen to make an image-based abuse report to <https://www.esafety.gov.au/report/image-based-abuse>

Or report to local Police or Crime stoppers.

If you are not in Australia, immediately contact your local Police for advice and to make a report.

If you are feeling unsafe now, call the Police on Triple Zero (**000**).

If you are experiencing image-based abuse as part of an abusive relationship, contact **1800RESPECT**



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