



Title: Pornography: What is it? What harm does it do?

Level: THIRD/FOURTH

Links to Curriculum for Excellence

Experiences and outcomes	Benchmarks
<p>I recognise that power can exist within relationships and can be used positively as well as negatively. HWB 4-45a</p> <p>I know that popular culture, the media and peer pressure can influence how I feel about myself and the impact this may have on my actions. HWB 4-46b</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguishes between a balance of power and abuse of power in relationships, for example, respect, trust, coercion, consent. • Evaluates how the media, including social media and pornography impact on physical and mental health.

Learning intentions

- Young people to reflect and develop their own views on pornography and learn approaches to manage their exposure to images/films they see.
- Pornography is viewed as a medium through which people are objectified, hurt and exploited.
- Young people understand that they have choices and can choose to not watch pornography.
- Young people begin to think critically about their views about pornography.

Success criteria

- I can talk about the difference between sex as it is portrayed in pornography and sex between consenting adults in a relationship.
- I can explain that pornography presents behaviours that can be violent or degrading, and that these behaviours are not appropriate in real-life relationships.
- I can express my own developing opinion about pornography.
- I can identify where or who to go to if I have a question or concern.

NOTE: Have your learners viewed pornography? Are there considerations for you in terms of facilitating this activity? In recent research published by the Children's Commissioner in England (2023) - link at the end of this activity plan - it is reported that:

- 10% of children have viewed online pornography by age 9.
- 27% had seen pornography by age 11.
- 50% had seen pornography by age 13.
- The average age at which children first see pornography is just under 13.

It is often difficult for adults to understand just how accessible this material is to children and young people. Many young people say that they first see pornography by accident, perhaps through pop ups or watching 'reaction videos' on YouTube, that is watching other people react to watching particularly graphic pornography. Children's (especially boys) earliest exposure to pornography and collective experiences of

viewing pornography together may be through the lens of humour rather than eroticism. They may have been sent pornographic images or film by others. Whilst bringing a clarity of view that pornography is exploitative and degrading it is important to adopt a pragmatic approach and listen to what young people may report viewing without judgement.

As with all RSHP discussion, questions should not be personal/about the individual, rather they should be general, about what 'young people' are exposed to or choose to watch. It is worth remembering that with the ubiquitous nature of pornography young men can conceptualise their first-time watching pornography as a 'rite of passage'.

Having recognised this, this may be a lesson where parameters on what is shared and discussed need to be maintained. While most young people will not want to share personal experiences of viewing pornography, some may do so. If young people begin to describe this in detail it is appropriate to stop them and remind them this is not a lesson in which you want or expect them to share. This will be particularly important if they attempt to share descriptions of graphic/violent material.

Across the RSHP resource there are many opportunities to learn about gender and interpersonal relationships, these other activities will also stress key messages about respect, non-violence and protection. At SENIOR Level there are further learning activities which explore pornography in more detail.

Resources to support this activity.

- PowerPoint slides
- Handout: Key learning points and links to further information
- *Porn: Fact or Fiction* animation from amaze.org (duration 1 minute 58 seconds)
<https://youtu.be/GdB2rmGqqNU>
- ChildLine pages about online porn: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/online-porn/>

Whenever you use content on a platform like YouTube please cue the film you intend to play in advance, check it is the film you want to view, and skip adverts.

Activity

1. Introduce the learning activity along these lines: Today the class will be talking about pornography.
 - Acknowledge that some young people may have seen a lot of pornography, some may not have seen any, and many will have seen some things maybe by accident or because someone has shared something on their phone. Emphasise no one is being asked to share personal experiences in this class.
 - The point of talking and learning together today is about trying to think about pornography, what messages it can portray and how young people understand it. Also explain that you will talk openly and honestly about pornography and that it is important that no-one judges or makes fun of anybody. It is ok to disagree with other people's opinions, but to use respectful language at all times.
 - Finally, if there is anything that young people do not want to ask in front of others, or would like more information about, remind them they can talk to you at another time.

2. **What is pornography?** Share the next 2 slides, checking understanding.

Pornography is sometimes called 'porn'. Pornography is a photograph, image, film or words that are about something sexual and is made or shared to make another person sexually excited.

Porn can show people's sexual body parts or show people having sex. Some porn can be upsetting because it shows a person being hurt or abused. Porn can show sexual acts that many people would find distressing and painful in real life.

3. **Class discussion.** *It is suggested much of the discussion in this activity is whole group/class so that young people do not find themselves in discussions which are uncomfortable for them.* Explain that (use slide):

Porn and sex are the most searched words on the internet. Porn is easily accessible, especially online. Acknowledge young people may have seen porn even if they were not searching for it.

Use the series of statements that follow about pornography, ask for a general view in the class about whether young people **agree** with, **disagree** with or maybe feel the answer is '**depends**'. You might consider using a platform like [Interactive presentation software - Mentimeter](#) to digitise young people's responses. They could do thumbs up, down or wavering to indicate 'depends'. Emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers – if people disagree that's okay. Each statement is followed by a bit of text by way of further explanation, after each young people may have a view they want to share.

- **Watching porn is harmless fun.** *Some people are of the view that porn encourages the person watching to just see the other person as a sexual object, and not as an equal human being, so this is bad for our relationships. A lot of porn does show people being hurt or abused, this is not okay and it's not normal or fun.*
- **Porn is only for men and boys.** *Most porn is watched by men and boys, but girls and women do watch it too. Nobody should be made to watch porn if they don't want to.*
- **You can watch too much porn.** *New scientific research says people who watch too much porn can become addicted. Then they need to watch more and more to feel sexually excited. You can also lose touch with what real sex and relationships are actually like.*
- **Watching porn can be bad for relationships.** *Porn can make boys or men think badly of women. If you watch too much porn, then you might have less enjoyment from real sex with a partner.*
- **Most young people have seen porn.** *Recent research tells us that 27% of children had seen pornography by age 11. 50% had seen pornography by age 13. The average age at which young people first see pornography is just under 13. Porn is really easy to find and see but it doesn't mean you have to like it or watch it.*
- **You need to be careful what you search for.** *If you search for something on the web you can't predict where it will take you. And if a site you visit uses cookies it is possible that you then start getting pop ups or ads for the thing you looked for. So, if you have a question or a worry, best ask an adult you trust rather than the internet.*
- **You can learn how to have sex by watching porn,** *Real sex and porn sex are different; we'll think more about this now.*

Round up discussion by emphasising that there are lots of different opinions about pornography. At this point re-emphasise/make a general statement that a young person doesn't have to watch porn and you don't have to watch it just because your friends are.

4. **Real or not real?** Watch the animation, it is funny and conveys the key messages from the activity so far: *Porn: Fact or Fiction* (duration 1 minute 58 seconds) <https://youtu.be/GdB2rmGqqNU> Any initial thoughts or comments?
5. **Class discussion - Real life sex vs porn sex:** Re-emphasise that although the pornography a young person might see looks real because it has people in it doing sexual things, as the animation just suggested, it is made up, it is a story, in this sense it is not real. In the slides that follow there are 9 sets of statements. The challenge for the group/class is to decide which side (left or right) might describe real sex (i.e. sex in the context of people's real relationships) and which describes porn sex (i.e. sex as portrayed in pornography). The order will change on different slides (so not always 'real sex' on the left....) Have those young people that want to shout out left/right to the question *Which describes real life sex?* or *Which statement describes the sex we might see in pornography?* (The end statement is about consent. There is content at this Level about consent, if this has not been covered have some discussion about consent meaning giving permission for sexual contact, if it has been covered refresh that discussion). Note in the table that follows about which is which:

Real sex	Porn sex
People don't always want to have sex.	Everyone is always up for sex.
You can get pregnant or get an STI if you don't use condoms and contraception.	People don't use condoms and there are no consequences.
Bodies, vulvas, breasts and penises can be all shapes and sizes.	Men have extra-large penises. Women have extra-large breasts and small vulvas.
People have body hair.	No-one has any body hair.
People can be quiet, or loud and make different sorts of noises when having sex.	Sex is loud, people scream as soon as they start having sex.
Men ejaculate/orgasm after a few minutes.	Men's erections last for a long time without ejaculating.
Sex usually involves 2 people.	Sex often involves lots of different people.
Sex can be fun, gentle and people can show love for each other.	Sex is rough and can be violent, without feelings or emotions. People are sometimes abused and hurt
You always have to get consent.	Consent is never discussed, men just assume, or don't care.

6. **Some things to remember about porn.** Share the handout designed for this learning activity. As you read though check understanding and clarify any questions. If there is time give young people more time to review it and chat amongst themselves, then take any further comments or questions.
7. **To end share the ChildLine pages about online porn on the smartboard** and scan down just to show what's available: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/online-porn/>

Additional information/support

The Children's Commissioner in England has conducted research into children and young people's exposure to pornography and the harm it does.

This is the full report: '[A lot of it is actually just abuse' - Young people and pornography | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/research-and-evidence/young-people-and-pornography/)

This is a summary for young people that you may want to use as an extension activity: [CCO-Pornography-and-Young-People-1.pdf \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/research-and-evidence/young-people-and-pornography/)

Connecting with home

The text below could be used to communicate with home about this activity.

This term, we are using one of our lessons in our Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood learning to talk about pornography. It is estimated that at least one-third of young people starting secondary school have viewed pornography, by the age of S2 over 95% will have. This activity allows young people to reflect on what pornography they may have seen, to develop their own views on pornography and learn approaches to manage their exposure to images/films they do not want to see.

There is good online information for parents and carers here: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/>

There is also online information and advice for young people from ChildLine here: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/online-porn/>

Practitioner Notes