What happens when you're sexually extorted?

Resources by young people, for young people

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Digital Child Sexual Exploitation

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Sexual extortion usually follows a similar pattern:

1. The person extorting you will use grooming tactics to build a trusting relationship with you. If they don't know you offline, they might create a fake profile that looks real and send you a friend request.

2. The person will start to 'love bomb' you: this involves being very affectionate and giving someone lots of attention very soon into a relationship. The person might also send you a stolen or AI-generated nude image that they claim is of themselves. They will then start asking you to send them sexual content in return.

3. Once you send them an image or other sexual content, they will start to threaten to share this content if you don't do what they say. If you do what they say, they will continue to extort you.

4. Remember: even if you have sent the person money or sexual content, it's never too late to get help. It's not your fault that you are being extorted and help is available.

Sexual extortion can be carried out by a stranger or by someone you already know in real life, like a friend, an ex or even a family member.

The person extorting you will nearly always use some kind of technology as a means: **94% of threats are made through digital platforms such as social media or instant messaging apps.**[1]

There are different demands a person extorting you can make, especially if you know them offline. For example, if the person extorting you is someone you had a romantic relationship with, they might threaten to share your sexual content unless you agree to stay in a relationship with them.

Even if you don't send a sexual image of yourself, the person extorting you can use AI to create one that looks real. **In 2025 alone, 8,029 AI-generated images and videos were assessed by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) as showing realistic child sexual abuse.**[2]

Remember: you are not to blame and help is available.

We've put together resources to support you or someone you know who's been affected by sexual extortion.

[1] This information is based on research from Thorn into how sexual extortion affects young people today. Source: Thorn (2025). *Sexual Extortion & Young People: Navigating Threats in Digital Environments*.
[2] This information is based on the Internet Watch Foundation's 2026 report: https://www.iwf.org.uk/media/hl1nvdti/iwf-ai-csam-report-2026.pdf