



# #GETCONSENT.

We live in an age of consent,  
in both sexual and non-sexual scenarios.

This booklet is a guide on consent culture.



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Sources:  
MacEwan University,  
Government of Canada,  
Everyday Feminism

# WHAT IS CONSENT?

**Consent is a voluntary agreement to engage in specific sexual activity or behaviour requiring that a person is able to freely articulate a choice, which includes the possibility of refusal. In other words, it is a freely given and clearly communicated “yes.”**

This means that there must be an understandable and ongoing exchange of affirmative words or conduct which indicate a willingness to participate in mutually agreed upon sexual activity.

For the purposes of this definition, there cannot be consent to sexual activity in the following circumstances:

- ❌ A person does not communicate “yes,” or communicates or implies “no” through their words, body language, and/or behaviour.
- ❌ A person is asleep, unconscious, incapacitated, unable to communicate, or otherwise unable to consent.
- ❌ A person has been threatened or coerced (i.e., is not agreeing voluntarily) into engaging in the sexual activity.
- ❌ A person uses a position of trust, power, or authority to coerce another into sexual activity.
- ❌ A person is impaired by alcohol and/or drugs.
- ❌ A person withdraws consent, at any time, before or during a sexual encounter.

The fact that consent was given in the past does not mean that consent is deemed to exist for present and future sexual activity.

# DID YOU KNOW...

Failing to receive consent before engaging in specific sexual activity or behaviour is a criminal offence in Canada. According to the Canadian Criminal Code:

- ✔ **Consent is voluntary:** Consent must be freely given and there is no consent if a person is pressured, manipulated, threatened, intimidated or otherwise coerced into saying “yes” or if a “yes” is obtained when there is an abuse of power, trust or authority.
- ✔ **Consent is affirmative:** Only yes means yes! Consent is actively communicated by words, body language and other forms of communication in the moment. If a person is not communicating “yes”, or if they say or imply “no” through words and behaviour, there is no consent.
- ✔ **Consent is person-specific:** There is no consent if someone else says “yes.” No one can consent on someone else’s behalf, including a spouse or a parent.
- ✔ **Consent is conscious:** A person is incapable of consenting if they are unconscious, asleep, or impaired by drugs or alcohol.
- ✔ **Consent is ongoing:** Everyone has the right to change their mind and withdraw consent at any time before or during a sexual activity.

# #GETCONSENT

Taking someone's picture without asking is not ok.

## Don't assume. Get... Consent!

To create a **culture of consent**, we need to practice consent, and not just in sexual situations.

Asking for consent for non-sexual touch is an opportunity to ask about, listen to and respect other people's boundaries.



Each person must give consent every time, whether in a one-time encounter or a long-term relationship. Sexual contact that is carried out without consent is sexual assault.

Ultimately, consent is not a checkbox or a list of rules: it is what respect and empathy look like in practice. It is about taking care of one another and treating our sexual partners as equals whose needs, boundaries, and well-being matter.

# SOME DEFINITIONS

## Sexual Assault

Any sexual contact without consent, which can include but is not limited to forced oral contact, forced groping or fondling, forced vaginal or anal penetration, and forced oral to genitalia contact. The behaviour need not be intentional to be considered sexual assault.

## Sexual Discrimination

Discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity as set out and defined in the Ontario's *Human Rights Code*. When someone is or feels discriminated against in the workplace, school, or other settings, it can undermine their sense of personal dignity. It can prevent them from earning a living, doing their job effectively, or reaching their full potential. Sexual Discrimination can also poison the environment for everyone else and if left unchecked, has the potential to escalate to violent behaviour.

## Sexual Harassment

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Incidents of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, situations when:

- ❌ Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an employee's work performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment;
- ❌ Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment, or of the teaching and learning process; or

# #GETCONSENT

Touching someone's belly without asking is not ok.

## Don't assume. Get... Consent!

**Consent** is voluntary, conscious, and verbal agreement to participate in any activity, including non-sexual situations.

In other words, it's a freely given and **clearly communicated "yes."**



Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used in employment decisions affecting that employee.

Examples of sexually harassing behaviours include, but are not limited to, comments or conduct of a sexual nature such as leering, dirty jokes, gestures, exposure to pornographic pictures or materials, unwanted comments, suggestions, innuendos, requests or demands of a sexual nature. The behaviour need not be intentional to be considered sexual harassment.

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Touching someone without asking is not ok.

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## Stalking

A form of criminal harassment prohibited by the *Criminal Code* of Canada involving persistent, unwanted communication and/or behaviours that collectively instill fear for the victim/target's safety or mental health.

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Touching someone's wheelchair without asking is not ok.

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## Lending a helping hand is great. But...



## Sexual Violence

Any sexualized act or act targeting a person's sexuality that is committed, threatened, or attempted against a person without that person's consent. Sexual violence varies in severity, can be physical or psychological in nature, and may include, but is not limited to, all forms of sexual contact, sexual humiliation, sexual exploitation, degrading sexual imagery, sending unwanted sexualized text messages, cyber harassment, indecent or sexualized exposure via electronic or social media or otherwise, sexual harassment, sexual discrimination, stalking, and sexual assault.

# CULTURE OF CONSENT



## You can help create a culture of consent in the workplace...

### Understand what sexual violence is

Sexual violence refers to a range of behaviours and includes any action carried out without consent, whether physical or psychological, through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual abuse in relationships, stalking and taking or sharing intimate photos or videos without consent.

### Consider what perpetuates rape culture

Rape culture is a culture where sexual violence is pervasive and where social norms, practices, media images and institutions normalize or trivialize sexual violence. In a rape culture, individuals who have experienced sexual violence are often blamed for what happened and people who commit sexual violence are not held accountable.

Rape culture can look like victim-blaming, rape jokes, “locker-room talk” and sexist, racist or ableist comments. These kinds of behaviours create an environment where sexual violence is implicitly or explicitly condoned and can make it difficult for survivors of sexual violence to reach out for support

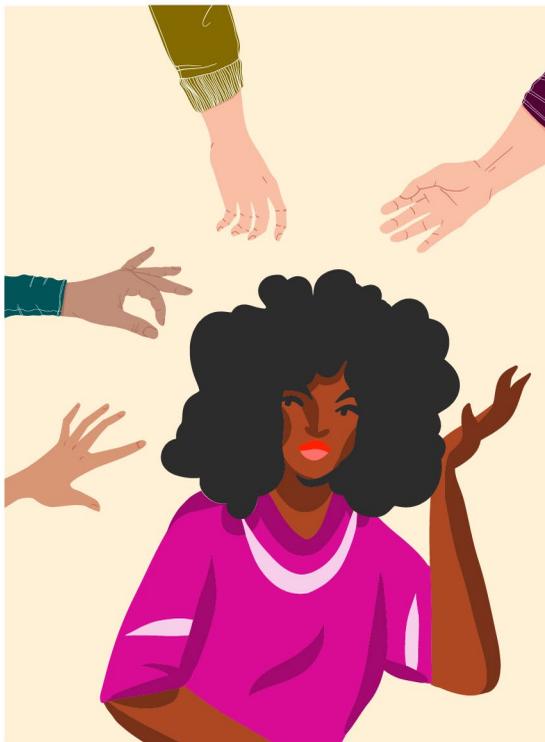
# #GETCONSENT

Touching someone's hair without asking is not ok.

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## Practice everyday consent

To create a culture of consent, we need to *practice* consent, and not just in sexual situations. Asking for consent for non-sexual touch, allowing children to choose whether or not to hug relatives, checking in before taking a picture or sharing a picture on social media, taking “no” for an answer instead of pressuring a friend to attend a party: these are all opportunities for us to ask about, listen to and respect other people's boundaries.

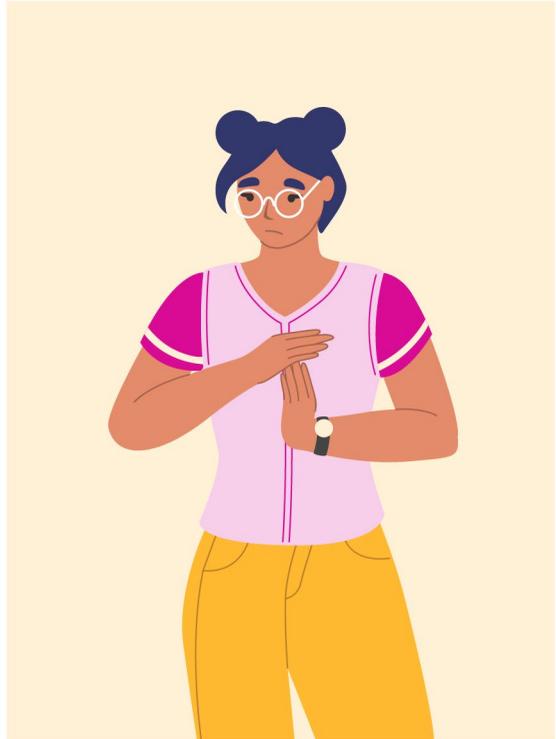
# #GETCONSENT

Forcing a discussion on someone is not ok.

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The word “consent,” usually carries a sexual connotation. But there are a host of things outside the bedroom that people all too often do without consent – and our culture needs to acknowledge that they are harmful as well.

The following are recommended steps, courtesy of Everyday Feminism, we can take to better practice consent in situations that do not involve sex.

# 1 Obtain consent before engaging in non-sexual forms of touch

Consent for touching another person isn't just necessary in bed. It's also necessary for kissing, hugging, and any other form of physical contact. This guideline is difficult to follow because our culture considers certain forms of touch necessary for polite conduct. However, hugging someone without consent just to be polite can have unintended consequences.

# 2 Get everyone's input before planning group activities

While it's fine to invite someone to a pre-planned event like a party (so long as they have the complete power to decline your invitation!), you should get their input on anything you expect them to participate in. Asking people what they want to do in advance, on the other hand, conveys that their enjoyment is a priority for you.

# 3 Don't reveal personal information about anyone without their permission

It's not okay to tell other people about problems someone else is having. It's also important to recognize that someone's decision to reveal information about themselves in one context doesn't mean they want it aired in another.

# 4 Obtain consent before photographing others

Everyone's body belongs to them and them alone, so just as you shouldn't touch it without their consent, you shouldn't photograph it without their permission either.

We should all get to decide if somebody else owns a picture of us, no matter who that person is. We should also have the right to decide how people use images of us.

## **5 Don't force a discussion someone doesn't want to have**

As with sexual consent, it doesn't matter if you've spoken about it before or you've already started the discussion.

Anyone can refrain from a conversation or leave at any time if it starts to make them uncomfortable. Even though feeling uncomfortable in a conversation can be positive because it means you're learning something new, it's entirely up to each individual how much they want to stretch their comfort zone.

## **6 Don't pressure anyone to accept anything from you**

Cooking for someone, making or buying someone a gift can put you in a vulnerable position. Your feelings may be hurt if they don't like it, and you may feel unappreciated if they don't use it. However, it does not make it okay to pressure someone to accept anything you've made or bought them.

By making it clear that nobody must assume interest in what you give them, you could save the recipient a lot of time eating, wearing, or doing something they don't want.

## **7 Decide in advance how expenses will be split**

People often make financial decisions based on how much they expect to spend, so not knowing about an expense in advance can mess up their plans.

To avoid a situation where people are pressured to spend more than they've budgeted, tell co-workers, event participants, peers and others in advance how much something you've planned will cost and ask if that's okay, or at least try to keep the cost to a minimum.

Remember, when people don't feel pressured or forced into situations they didn't consent to, they feel empowered to make decisions about their own bodies and their lives.

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## Use your voice

We all have a role to play in creating a culture of consent. You can use your voice in small ways every day to contribute to positive change. This can include talking about the realities of sexual violence with friends and family, challenging victim-blaming or pointing out examples of rape culture. Share what you have learned about the issue with others, ask questions and be open to ongoing learning and dialogue.

# YES!



**The Ontario Federation of Labour represents 54 unions and one million workers.  
It is Canada's largest provincial labour federation.**

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