# How do young people know if they are ready for sex?

Some of the following prompts may help provide useful discussion starters for those young people to work out if they are ready to begin having sex.

* Do I want to have sex? Have I said so? And if so, what activities am I okay with? What am I not?
* Does this feel right?
* Am I sure the other person wants to have sex with me? Have I asked them? Have I asked them what they are comfortable doing?
* Am I over 16? Is the other person over 16?
* Have I pressured my partner? Have they pressured me?
* Why do I want to have sex?
* Am I feeling pressure from my partner/friends/someone else?
* Do we care about one another and want to do this?
* Do I respect my partner? Does my partner respect me?
* Do I understand consent? Do I know how to communicate consent? Do I know how to check-in with my partner?
* Do I feel comfortable/safe with the person I am having sex with?
* Do I feel okay to say no at any point?
* Do I have any anxieties or fears?
* Do I need to think about preventing a pregnancy? If so, what are we doing?
* What would I do if I or my partner got pregnant?
* Do I know how to protect myself/my partner from an STI? If so, what are we doing?
* Who has condoms? If not, where can we get them?
* Do I know where and how to get an STI test?
* Is one of us under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

The above lists may not fit everyone’s values and beliefs; however the aim is to provide a starting point and possible discussion triggers.

In working out if someone is ready to have sex, there are multiple important principles to consider:

* Know that you have a right to choose not to have sex, or to wait until you feel really ready. Everyone has the right to decide what sexual behaviours they are happy to engage in, if any.  It is reasonable to expect their friends and sexual partners will respect those decisions.
* Try to work out what are your values and beliefs about ‘having sex’.
* Understand that people have sex for a range of reasons, including to become closer, to feel loved, to feel good, to get it over and done with, to fit in, or to rebel. Not all these reasons are ideal.
* If getting someone to love you is the reason for having sex, ask yourself whether you think that person actually likes you? If they don’t really like you – will having sex really change that?
* Remember there are lots of different ways to enjoy sexual feelings. Some people do nothing. Some masturbate (and may have done so since they were babies). Some people decide that some sexual behaviours are ok but not others.
* Every young person has a right to information that will help them keep safe and healthy, which includes information about avoiding pregnancy and STIs.
* Making safe sexual decisions can be nearly impossible if a person is drunk or high.

Young people need to think about and keep their own ‘personal list’ of indicators in mind when making decisions (everyone is different).

This section is adapted from: WA Department of Health. [*Talk Soon. Talk Often. A Guide for Parents Talking to their Kids about Sex*](http://gdhr.wa.gov.au/resources/booklets-and-brochures/-/asset_publisher/arcOQ3YIBkzj/content/talk-soon-talk-often-a-guide-for-parents-talking-to-their-kids-about-s-1?_101_INSTANCE_arcOQ3YIBkzj_redirect=%2Fresources%2Fbooklets-and-brochures). 2018.