



Discussion Guide

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For Professionals Working with Teens

Sexetc.org

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Lesson for Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will

- 1) Know at least three criteria that teens should meet when deciding if they're ready to have sex or not.
- 2) Be able to compare ten criteria that determine a teen's readiness to have sex and contrast their importance.

TIME NEEDED

50 minutes

MATERIALS

- Copies of "Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?"—one per student
- Copies of "Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?: Ranking Worksheet"—one per student
- Copies of "Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?: Case Studies Rating Worksheet"—one per each small group

PROCEDURE

1. Explain to your students that one of the most complicated and important choices is deciding when and with whom to have sex. Explain that many adults and some teens believe that it's best to wait until after high school to start having sex. Explain that others believe that teens are capable of making responsible decisions about sex while in high school.

Distribute copies of "Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?" and read together with your students.

After students have read the article, ask the following question:

- Do you think teens are too young to have sex?

Solicit three or four responses from volunteers.
[10 minutes]

2. Explain that there are a wide range of opinions about this issue and it's important for each person to think critically about what he or she believes.

Explain that you will be distributing a worksheet with ten criteria on it. Each student is to rank the criteria from 1 to 10 based on how important he or she feels that criteria is for a teen who may be deciding whether or not he or she is ready for sex. Explain that a ranking of one means it's the most important criteria on the list and a ranking of 10 means it's the least important. Each criteria should

be assigned a different number from 1 to 10. Ask if there are any questions about the directions, and if not, distribute the worksheets. Give students a few minutes to complete the worksheet individually. [5 minutes]

3. Next, divide students into small groups of three or four. Explain that within their small groups, students should compare and contrast their rankings and try to reach agreement about the rankings for each item. Give groups five minutes to complete this task. [5 minutes]

4. When five minutes have passed, gather students' attention and ask the following questions:

- By show of hands, how many groups were able to reach complete agreement on the rankings?
- What did it feel like to try to agree?

Process their responses by affirming how difficult it can be to agree on anything that involves people's values and beliefs, which usually vary widely. Acknowledge to the group that it's OK to not agree. Explain that the more important goal was to think critically about how you feel and explain it to others in your group. [5 minutes]

5. Next, explain that each group will receive two different case studies of teens who are trying to decide whether or not to have sex. The group should rate the teen on a scale of 1 to 10 for each criterion and then decide whether they feel that teen is ready to have sex or not, based on his or her ratings.

Explain that these ratings are different from the worksheet in the previous exercise. Make sure students understand that this time they will rate each teen on all ten criteria. For example, the first teen might have really great communication with his or her partner, so that teen would receive a score of nine out of ten for that item. But that

teen isn't comfortable buying condoms, so he or she might receive a score of three out of ten on that item. Ask if there are any questions about the directions, and if not, distribute the case studies to each group. [10 minutes]

6. Gather the groups' attention and ask the following discussion questions:

- How did it feel to decide for another person whether they're ready or not to have sex? What was challenging or easy about the exercise?
- Let's talk about Casey first. By show of hands, how many people felt that Casey was ready to have sex? By show of hands, how many people felt that Casey was not ready to have sex? Tell me a little bit about your thinking.
- Let's talk now about Jalessa. By show of hands, how many people felt that Jalessa was ready to have sex? By show of hands, how many people felt that Jalessa was not ready to have sex? Tell me more about your thinking.
- How did you decide whether Jalessa or Casey was ready to have sex? [10 minutes]

7. Lastly, instruct students to flip their worksheets over and privately—meaning no one will see it and it will not be collected—give themselves a rating from 1 to 10 of how ready they feel to have sex right now in their lives. One is not at all ready and 10 is ready. Instruct students to be honest since no one will see their papers. Give students one minute to complete.

Close lesson by encouraging students to think carefully about all of their decisions related to sexuality. Choosing not to have sex is safest, but if that's not someone's choice, there are ways to protect oneself described at Sexetc.org. [5 minutes]

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Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?

Ranking Worksheet

Rank the following items from most important to least important for teens in deciding whether or not they are ready to have sex.

#1 = MOST Important	#10 = LEAST Important
	Talk with your partner about any previous sexual behaviors—including oral, anal and vaginal sex—that would put you at risk for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
	Talk with your partner about what you are or are NOT comfortable doing sexually
	Get tested for STDs; if there's an infection, start necessary treatment
	Buy condoms and/or latex barrier from pharmacy or store
	Ready to be naked in front of partner
	Ready to buy a pregnancy test from pharmacy or store, if necessary
	Ready to handle situation if parent(s) or guardian(s) find out
	Talk with your partner (if dating other gender) about how to handle possible unplanned pregnancy (abortion, adoption or becoming teen parent)
	Talk with your partner about what impact having sex together might have on your relationship
	The decision is not being influenced by pressure from another person (boyfriend/girlfriend or friends) or desire to just "get it over with"

Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?

Case Studies Rating Worksheet

Rate each character on the following criteria and then decide if you believe Jalessa or Casey is ready to have sex or not.

JALESSA	#10 = HIGHEST #1 = LOWEST	CASEY
	Talk with your partner about any previous sexual behaviors—including oral, anal and vaginal sex—that would put you at risk for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)	
	Talk with your partner about what you are or are NOT comfortable doing sexually	
	Get tested for STDs; if there's an infection, start any necessary treatment	
	Buy condoms and/or latex barrier from pharmacy or store	
	Ready to be naked in front of partner	
	Ready to buy a pregnancy test from pharmacy or store, if necessary	
	Ready to handle situation if parent(s) or guardian(s) find out	
	Talk with your partner (if dating other gender) about how to handle possible unplanned pregnancy (abortion, adoption or becoming teen parent)	
	Talk with your partner about what impact having sex together might have on your relationship	
	The decision is not being influenced by pressure from another person (boyfriend/girlfriend or friends) or desire to just "get it over with"	

Is Jalessa ready?

Yes
 No
 Unsure

Is Casey ready?

Yes
 No
 Unsure

Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?

Case Study

ABOUT ME

Name: **Casey**
Birthday: **Aug 6**
Hometown: **Riverside**
Eye Color: **blue**
Hair Color: **dirty blonde**
Relationship Status: **in a relationship**
Zodiac Sign: **Leo**
Goal for the Year: **Have fun**
Your Most Overused Phrase in Text Messages: **lol**
Favorite Food: **mac & cheese**
Have You Been in Love: **Yes**

OK, so we've been hanging out together for a few months, and things have gotten more serious lately. We've been good friends since third grade and then we started flirting more, and we just started hooking up one day. I know neither of us have ever been with anyone else. But things are pretty casual between us, so I'm not sure what would happen to us if we had sex. We've never really talked about what's been going on between us. It just kind of happens. I've already bought condoms, but I'm not sure how I feel.

.....CUT HERE.....

Are Teens Too Young to Have Sex?

Case Study

ABOUT ME

Name: **Jalessa**
Birthday: **Feb 3**
Hometown: **Stanton**
Eye Color: **brown**
Hair Color: **brown**
Relationship Status: **it's complicated**
Zodiac Sign: **Aquarius**
Goal for the Year: **Have fun**
Your Most Overused Phrase in Text Messages: **idk**
Favorite Food: **french fries**
Have You Been in Love: **Not sure**

OMG! I love him so much! We've been together for almost two months. He used to be with this other girl, but he finally realized that we were perfect for each other and things have been amazing. We text all day long and talk about everything, and I feel like he really cares about me. He even wants me to have his baby. I'm going to the clinic on Friday for my first checkup and plan to ask for birth control. I just hope my parents don't find out we're together because they think he's no good for me. I had planned to wait until I was married to have sex, but now I'm not sure.