

Consent 101

What is consent?

Consent is a clear and unambiguous agreement, expressed in mutually understandable words or actions, to engage in a particular activity. Either party at any point can withdraw consent. Consent must be voluntarily given and may not be valid if a person is being subjected to actions or behaviors that elicit emotional or psychological pressure, intimidation, or fear. Consent to engage in one sexual activity, or past agreement to engage in a particular sexual activity, cannot be presumed to constitute consent to engage in the same or different sexual activity. A person who is incapacitated cannot validly give consent.

Communicating consent

Consent to sexual activity can be communicated in a variety of ways, but one should presume that consent has not been given in the absence of clear, positive agreement. While verbal consent is not an absolute requirement for consensual sexual activity, verbal communication prior to engaging in sex helps to clarify consent. Communicating verbally before engaging in sexual activity is imperative. Talking about your own and your partner's sexual desires, needs, and limitations provides a basis for a positive experience.

Consent must be clear for each participant at every stage of a sexual encounter. The absence of "no" should not be understood to mean there is consent. A prior relationship does not indicate consent of future activity.

Consent: A Sober Yes!

The use of alcohol or drugs may seriously interfere with judgment about whether consent has been sought and given. A person who is asleep or mentally or physically incapacitated, either through the effect of drugs or alcohol or for any other reasons, is not capable of giving valid consent.

At college you will find yourself in a variety of new situations that will be both thrilling and exciting. It is likely that you'll develop relationships with various individuals that could end up in certain sexual situations. In these situations it is always important to get consent. But what does consent look like? Plainly, consent is a sober "yes."

What is NOT consent?

- Silence
- Relying solely on body language
- The absence of "no"
- Being drunk
- Coercion
- Marital/Relationship status
- Power differentials
- Clothing choice

Sexual contact without consent is sexual assault!

**For more information, contact NOVA's Confidential Victim Advocate at
703-323-2136 or cokirkland@nvcc.edu or wellness@nvcc.edu**

5 components of Consent

- 1. Given freely and willingly**
- 2. Clear communication**
- 3. Unimpaired decision-making**
- 4. Subject to change**
- 5. Step-by-step (for every action)**