

Flirting or Hurting?

GOALS

To learn about the kinds of sexual harassment that take place; to help students discern the line between flirting and sexual harassment

SUGGESTED TIME

Up to one class period

RESOURCES

Poster or transparency and projector for displaying chart

1. Review classroom agreements, including how to refer to inappropriate language.
2. On the blackboard or a transparency, prepare a chart with the following headings and subheadings:

Verbal or Written		Gestures		Physical	
Flirting	Harassment	Flirting	Harassment	Flirting	Harassment

Add as many rows as needed.

3. Ask students to arrange their chairs in a circle, if possible.
4. Read or paraphrase the following:

We're going to talk about the difference between flirting and sexual harassment. Before we begin, I want to point out that this is not an activity about blaming guys for certain types of behavior. While we may think of several examples of sexual harassment that are usually committed by guys against girls, we're also going to think about how sexual harassment can also be committed by guys against guys, by girls against girls, or by girls against guys. Also, while many of us may never experience sexual harassment, all of us at some point witness sexual harassment. In these ways, sexual harassment affects us all. Therefore, this activity is about helping all of us figure out when someone's actions may be hurtful so we can learn as bystanders or targets how to speak up.

All of you see how other students behave whether there are adults around or not—in classrooms, locker rooms, the cafeteria, hallways and so on. In this discussion, let's draw upon what you already know and see. You are the experts about what goes on around you.

Please look at this chart. As you can see, there are three columns representing three types of communication. First, we'll focus on the **verbal or written** things that you observe students saying or writing. Then we'll focus on **gestures** that you observe students making—these are things people communicate without speaking or touching. Finally, we'll consider **physical** ways of communicating that involve touching of some sort. For each type of communication, we're going to come up with examples of **flirting** and examples of **harassment**.



Teaching Tip

Before you ask students for examples of flirting and sexual harassment, you may wish to help them come up with a simple definition for each. For example, *flirting* is when someone communicates in a way that is just part of hanging out or trying to get to know someone. *Sexual harassment* is when someone communicates in a sexual way that is unwanted and unwelcomed by the target and interferes with that person's life at school.

- Go through each heading and subheading one at a time, asking students for examples of each. Write down examples under the appropriate subheading. Encourage students to give examples they know from a school setting and not to stray to hypothetical out-of-school situations. If one column isn't being addressed, ask students specific questions, such as "Can you give me examples of physical ways students flirt in school?"
- Students will most likely come up with examples of behavior that can be both flirting and harassment, or one or the other depending on the situation. You can indicate *both* or *depends* by drawing an arrow and giving details at the bottom of the page. For example:

Verbal or Written		Gestures		Physical	
Flirting	Harassment	Flirting	Harassment	Flirting	Harassment
"You look nice." ←→		Winking	Grabbing own crotch	Hugging ←→	
"I like your hair today."	"Nice ass."	Blowing a kiss ↔			Grabbing a private part
Depends on: Tone of voice How they look at you Who else is around		Depends on: Friend or stranger? Age In public or private?		Depends on: Friend or stranger? Location How they hug you	