Where Do You Stand on When to Have Sex?



**By**[**Kelsey Schwimmer**](http://sexetc.org/author/kelseyschwimmer/)**, 17, Staff Writer***Originally Published: March 24, 2014Revised: March 24, 2014*

It snuck up on me when I was in the car with my mom on the way back from school. “I just want you to know,” my mom started, “that I’m offering right now to buy you condoms if you need them. I won’t ask any questions if you don’t want me to, but I want you to be safe.”

“Um,” I replied eloquently, “OK… Thanks?” I couldn’t help but wonder: *Does this mean she’s letting me know she thinks it’s OK for me to have*[*sex*](http://sexetc.org/sex_terms/sex/)*now? Or is she just planning for the inevitable and trying to avoid the worst?*

Most of us have been there: that awkward conversation with your parents about sex. Sometimes it happens when you reach [puberty](http://sexetc.org/sex_terms/puberty/) or when you start dating. It can be totally uncomfortable, and it often brings up thoughts about when to have sex for the first time.

When my mother made her offer, I knew that I was not ready for sex. Maybe I’d be ready in a year. Or five. Who knows? But at least I knew that, no matter what, she would be supportive and helpful.

Every person has a different opinion about when to have sex for the first time. But, [according to the Guttmacher Institute](http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-ATSRH.html), 61 percent of teens who are 18 years old have had sex. Many teens will wait until later, which could be when they move out or go to college. Some wait until they are in a long-term, committed relationship and others wait until marriage. But how does everyone decide when to do it?

*Every person has a different opinion about when to have sex for the first time.*

**Waiting to Have Sex**

Some people believe you should wait until marriage to have sex for the first time. In many religions, it is expected that you will not engage in premarital sex. However, this doesn’t take into account same-sex couples who may not live in a state where they can marry.

Tristan, 17, from Los Angeles, says, “I have not had sex before and don’t intend to until marriage! I think teens should not have sex, but I wouldn’t judge someone who did. I believe waiting until marriage is a special gift that you and your spouse can share, and it really shows commitment.”

Some people wait until after high school to have sex. In high school, relationships can be short term, and there isn’t always a lot of privacy. Daniel, 17, from Princeton, New Jersey, says, “I’m waiting at least until college to have sex. I’ll be older and more responsible, and I think I’ll really able to know when I’m ready.”

Still others wait until they are in a long-term relationship. They feel there should be mutual trust, respect and understanding before they have sex.

“I first had sex when I was 17 after being in a serious relationship for about four months. After about four more months we broke up, but I don’t regret losing my [virginity](http://sexetc.org/sex_terms/virginity/) in a relationship that didn’t last forever,” says Jane, 18, from St. Louis, Missouri. “For me, it was important that I lost my virginity to someone I loved and who loved and respected me.”

For teens like Jane, it is important that both partners are both committed and care deeply about each other.

**You Decide When to Have Sex**

One of the best ways for people to decide when they are ready to have sex is when they feel completely comfortable with the idea. You know that you’re ready to have sex when it is something you want to do, and it’s something you fully understand, including how to protect yourself from an unintended [pregnancy](http://sexetc.org/sex_terms/pregnancy/)or sexually transmitted diseases. There will always be other people’s ideas and opinions, but you should make sure you’re comfortable. Trust yourself, and you’ll figure out what the best option is for you.

Hannah, 17, from Topeka, Kansas, isn’t waiting for a specific time, but instead for the right person. “My criterion has always been to feel 100-percent comfortable with myself and the other person.”

In the end, it’s up to you to decide when it’s the right time to have sex.