

Red Flags for Financially Motivated Sextortion

Teaching the script is the prevention. Financially motivated sextortion runs a similar playbook almost every time. Once you and your child both recognize it, it stops working.

A COMMON PLAYBOOK:

- 1 CONTACT** A new follower or DM from an attractive “girl” your child doesn't know in person, often posing as a peer.¹
- 2 FLIRT** Fast-moving, flattering conversation. Compliments escalate quickly. The “girl” seems unusually interested very quickly.¹
- 3 IMAGE REQUEST** The conversation turns sexual, often framed as reciprocal image requests (“I'll show you if you show me”).²
- 4 THE SWITCH** A request to move the conversation to a different app, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, or Signal.¹
- 5 THE THREAT** Within minutes of receiving an image from your child, the tone changes completely. Flattery turns to threats. This is often instant and disorienting.¹
- 6 DEMAND** A specific dollar amount is demanded, usually payable through Cash App, Venmo, gift cards, or crypto. May include screenshots of the victim's contact list as proof of intent to expose.²
- 7 ESCALATE** The demand can get more aggressive and can escalate. The threat doesn't go away with payment as offenders frequently release the images anyway.³

HOW AI CAN BE USED IN SEXTORTION:

A child no longer has to send an image to be targeted. Offenders can generate convincing explicit images using a child's real face pulled from a team photo or social media post.

This means any child with an online presence is a potential target, whether or not they ever shared anything.⁴

SOURCES

- ¹ICE, “Sextortion: It’s More Common Than You Think” — [ice.gov/features/sextortion](https://ice.dhs.gov/features/sextortion)
- ²Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Cybertip.ca, “Online Harms: Sextortion” — cybertip.ca/en/online-harms-sextortion
- ³FBI/HSI, National Public Safety Alert on Financial Sextortion Schemes, Dec. 2022 — fbi.gov/news/press-releases/fbi-and-partners-issue-national-public-safety-alert-on-financial-sextortion-schemes
- ⁴FBI IC3, PSA230605, June 2023 — ic3.gov/PSA/2023/psa230605

Disclosure: Claude, an AI tool, supported the development of this piece by drafting text. An anti-human trafficking and child exploitation subject matter expert reviewed and approved every piece of AI-assisted content in this campaign before publication. The Tim Tebow Foundation is committed to using AI thoughtfully and transparently in service of our mission.