

## **“How do you ask someone to use a condom?”: Talking about the mechanics of sex**

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**Background:** Young people in Australia, as elsewhere, have access to sexual health information via school based RSE programs. A significant focus of this education has been on raising awareness in relation to STI's and contraception usage. To supplement this education, young people have turned to a wide range of online sources of information about sex and relationships. Through the use of interviews with young people and key informants, this research sought to investigate the key 'gaps' in sex and relationships information that would support young people in navigating sex and relationships.

**Methods:** In-depth, semi-structured qualitative interview were conducted with 22 young people aged 18-15 and 22 key informants working in relevant sexual education and digital content creation roles across Australia. Interviewees were asked about what information young people are looking for, where they access this information, and what information would be beneficial in assisting young people's negotiation of sex and relationships. Reflexive thematic analysis techniques were used to analyse the data.

**Results:** While young people and key informants described young people to often have a grasp on 'the basics' of sex as a result of RSE programs, they described a strong need for information that provides examples of how to navigate the conversational and practical aspects of sexual interactions. In particular, both young people and key informants noted the limited availability, both in online and offline sources, of practical examples that demonstrate 'the mechanics' of sexual interactions that can be used by young people to inform their personal practice.

**Conclusion:** To support the building of sexual communication and negotiation skills, and reduce anxiety in navigating new relationships, online and offline spaces offer opportunities to provide young people with practical examples of how to navigate sexual situations.

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