

*"It made me feel that a woman isn't worth much, and it shouldn't be that way."*

-Female high school student,  
"Hostile Hallways," American  
Association of University Women, 1993

*"No, I do not enjoy it. I mean, it's my body."*

-Male student, *Sexual Harassment and  
Teens*, Strauss, 1992

*"On the day our advertisements were due, two people had advertisements for Coke and swimsuits, both showing women in a very sexual manner. When they were put up guys whistled, hollered, and said 'Ya' and 'Ohhh.' Some guys stood up and clapped. In the pictures both women were lying down, practically wearing nothing... I looked at the teacher... I said to myself, 'How does the teacher view me?'"*

-Female student, *Sexual Harassment:  
High School Girls Speak Out*, Larkin, 1994

*"The worst place is the lounge. There's usually a group of guys who start talking and making rude comments about girls. I would never go in there alone... They usually say things like 'Go fetch! Get us something to eat. Go fetch a Coke. Come do sexual favors for us.'"*

-Female high school student, *Failing at Fairness*, Sadker and Sadker, 1994

*"You may laugh or something because you're nervous and people are looking at you, but it does bother you—it affects your self-esteem."*

-Female student, *Sexual Harassment and Teens*, Strauss, 1994

## What can I do if I am being sexually harassed at school?

Many students who are sexually harassed do nothing, but ignoring harassment will not make it stop and may make it worse.

- Remember that the harassment is not your fault.
- Make it clear to the harasser that you don't want him or her to do those things. If you don't want to confront the person, write a letter.
- Tell someone you trust, like a parent, teacher, or counselor, about the harassment.
- Keep any notes or pictures the harasser sends you. Keep a record of when and where each incident occurs. This information will be useful if you report the harassment to a school administrator, or if you decide to take legal action.
- If the harassment continues, notify a principal or administrator. Under Title IX, which made sex discrimination in schools illegal, your school is legally responsible for providing an environment free of sexual harassment.

- If the harassment continues, you may file a complaint by contacting:  
U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
111 N. Canal St., Suite 1053  
Chicago, IL 60606-7204  
(312) 886-8434

Call WCASA for more information.

*This brochure is intended to provide an overview of a complex law and does not constitute legal advice.*

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# Sexual Harassment at School

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## Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault

600 Williamson Street, Ste N-2  
Madison, WI 53703  
(608) 257-1516  
[www.wcasa.org](http://www.wcasa.org)

## What is school-based sexual harassment?

*School-based sexual harassment is unwanted sexual attention that someone experiences on school grounds or at school-sponsored functions. Examples of sexual harassment include the following behaviors, when they are unwanted:*

- Sexual touching or pinching or sexually brushing against someone
- Snapping bras
- Forcing someone to kiss or do something sexual
- Pressuring someone into sexual activity in return for a good grade
- Name-calling (like “honey” or “bitch”)
- Giving or showing sexual pictures or notes to someone
- Rating someone (such as on a scale from 1 to 10)
- Flashing or mooning
- Pulling clothing off or down
- Cornering or blocking someone in a sexual way
- Howling, catcalling, or whistling
- Spying on someone as he or she is dressing or showering
- Writing sexual graffiti about someone or spreading sexual rumors about someone
- Making sexual comments or jokes, or asking sexual questions
- Making sexual gestures or giving sexual looks or leers

## Who experiences sexual harassment?

*The majority of teenagers experience some form of sexual harassment while they are in school. Girls are sexually harassed more often and at younger ages, but boys can be sexually harassed too. A 1993 American Association of University Women report found that 85 percent of girls and 76 percent of boys in high school have experienced some form of sexual harassment during their school years. When someone experiences unwanted sexual attention, that attention can be classified as sexual harassment regardless of the gender or age of the victim.*

## Who does the harassing?

*Students, teachers, administrators, custodians, coaches, or other school staff members can perpetrate sexual harassment. Both males and females can sexually harass others.*

**How do I know if what I’m experiencing is sexual harassment? Maybe someone is just flirting with me.**

*According to the law, the feelings of the person receiving the attention determine whether or not a behavior is sexual harassment. Flirting is welcome, wanted sexual behavior, whereas sexual harassment is unwanted.*

## How do I know if I’m sexually harassing someone?

*Ask yourself, “Why do I think this person wants this attention? Am I sure that he or she doesn’t mind that I say or do these things? How would I feel if someone said or did this to my sister or brother, or to me?” If you aren’t sure whether or not the person welcomes the attention, ask.*

**Why do some people make such a big deal out of this? It’s just a part of life. People who are offended by it have no sense of humor.**

*Sexual harassment is serious, illegal and degrading. No one should have to tolerate abuse. Sexual harassment should not be dismissed by saying that “boys will be boys” or by saying that experiencing it will help someone learn to deal with the “real world.” Students who have been sexually harassed, especially girls, report that they find it harder to concentrate and study, think about changing schools, earn lower grades, and like themselves less as a result of the harassment.*

**If a girl is promiscuous, or is dressed provocatively, isn’t it partly her fault if she is sexually harassed? No. Sexual harassment, like rape or any form of abuse, is never the fault of the victim, and is always the responsibility of the perpetrator.**