



Sexuality Education Programs: Definitions & Point-by-Point Comparison

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Abstinence-Only Education teaches abstinence as the only morally correct option of sexual expression for teenagers. It usually censors information about contraception and condoms for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unintended pregnancy.

Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education teaches abstinence as the only morally correct option of sexual expression for unmarried young people. Programs funded under the 1996 Welfare Reform Act must censor information about contraception and condoms for the prevention of STDs and unintended pregnancy.

Abstinence-Centered Education – Another term normally used to mean abstinence-only education.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education teaches about abstinence as the best method for avoiding STDs and unintended pregnancy, but also teaches about condoms and contraception to reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy and of infection with STDs, including HIV. It also teaches interpersonal and communication skills and helps young people explore their own values, goals, and options.

Abstinence-Based Education – Another term normally used to mean comprehensive sexuality education.

Abstinence-Plus Education – Another term normally used to mean comprehensive sexuality education.

<i>Comprehensive Sexuality Education</i>	<i>Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Education</i>
Teaches that sexuality is a natural, normal, healthy part of life	Teaches that sexual expression outside of marriage will have harmful social, psychological, and physical consequences
Teaches that abstinence from sexual intercourse is the most effective method of preventing unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV	Teaches that abstinence from sexual intercourse before marriage is the only acceptable behavior
Provides values-based education and offers students the opportunity to explore and define their individual values as well as the values of their families and communities	Teaches only one set of values as morally correct for all students
Includes a wide variety of sexuality related topics, such as human development, relationships, interpersonal skills, sexual expression, sexual health, and society and culture	Limits topics to abstinence-only-until-marriage and to the negative consequences of pre-marital sexual activity
Includes accurate, factual information on abortion, masturbation, and sexual orientation	Usually omits controversial topics such as abortion, masturbation, and sexual orientation
Provides positive messages about sexuality and sexual expression, including the benefits of abstinence	Often uses fear tactics to promote abstinence and to limit sexual expression
Teaches that proper use of latex condoms, along with water-based lubricants, can greatly reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of unintended pregnancy and of infection with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV	Discusses condoms only in terms of failure rates; often exaggerates condom failure rates
Teaches that consistent use of modern methods of contraception can greatly reduce a couple's risk for unintended pregnancy	Provides no information on forms of contraception other than failure rates of condoms
Includes accurate medical information about STDs, including HIV; teaches that individuals can avoid STDs	Often includes inaccurate medical information and exaggerated statistics regarding STDs, including HIV; suggests that STDs are an inevitable result of pre-marital sexual behavior
Teaches that religious values can play an important role in an individual's decisions about sexual expression; offers students the opportunity to explore their own and their family's religious values	Often promotes specific religious values
Teaches that a woman faced with an unintended pregnancy has options: carrying the pregnancy to term and raising the baby, or carrying the pregnancy to term and placing the baby for adoption, or ending the pregnancy with an abortion	Teaches that carrying the pregnancy to term and placing the baby for adoption is the only morally correct option for pregnant teens