

Our Online Legacy

Imagine being 100% proud of everything you've ever put on the internet. Whether on social media sites or your own blog or website, you know that what you've shared has been truthful, kind, and considerate of the rights and privacy of others. For tweens & teens taught digital citizenship, this can be part of their legacy.

While our actions online can last forever – and be seen by millions of people – many people find it harder to be a thoughtful, positive citizen online than in the offline world.

Every day, thousands of tweens & teens make bad choices on social media.

Know anyone who has:

- Insulted someone's clothing choices online?
- Commented on someone's body?
- Shared a photo or video of other kids without their permission?
- Watched R or X rated videos?

Developing your own or your child's digital citizenship is 100% possible. However, it takes time. Just like new drivers need to learn the rules of the road and clock enough hours behind the wheel, tweens & teens also need to learn the rules of the digital road & get feedback on their choices.

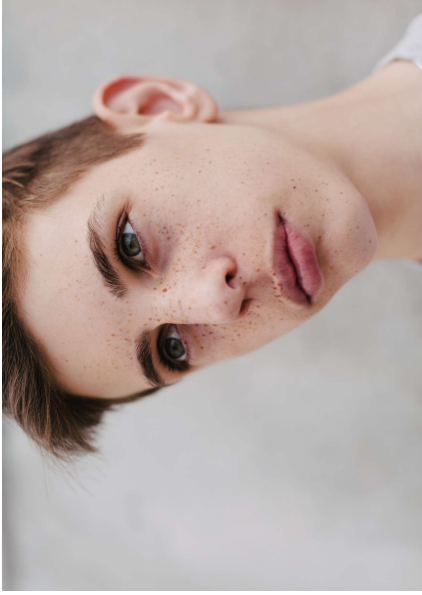
Waiting until after 8th grade for independent smartphone access is one safe way to create this legacy.

Risks of Smartphones

- Owning a Smartphone when younger than 14 predicts lower self-worth, motivation and resilience & higher anxiety, addiction, aggression & suicidal thoughts. ([Sapien labs, 2023](#))
- More than 3 hrs daily looking at a screen is linked to academic problems, sleep problems, body image issues, and behavior disorders. ([US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, 2023](#))



Digital Citizenship & Safety: Grades 6-8



Smartphone Alternatives

While handing kids an old iPhone might feel easier than finding a new device, evidence suggests it may not be in their best interest.

Thankfully, there are many options out there to keep connected to friends & family while limiting exposures that pose the biggest risks to youth.

Alternative smartphones offer calling, texting, photos, and listening to music.

Here are a few options. Find more ideas @ <https://www.waituntil8th.org/devices>

Safe Watches: Gabb, Gizmo, TickTalk

Safe Phones: Gabb, LightPhone2, Bark, Pinwheel, & Wisephone



Developing Digital Citizenship & Safety

Commonsense Media's Digital

Citizenship Curriculum was developed in partnership with Harvard & is used by over a million teachers. Check out their Digital Citizenship Grades 6-12 Family Conversations, Family Tips & Family Activities resources on topics like:

- Media Balance & Well-Being
- Privacy & Security
- Digital Footprint & Identity
- Relationships & Communication
- Cyberbullying, Digital Drama & Hate Speech

<https://www.common sense.org/education/>

PBS has 156 videos, lesson plans & handouts on Digital Citizenship. Some great options:

- When is your brain ready for Social Media?
- Search Safely Online Like a Pro

<https://pbsnc.pbslearningmedia.org/> search "Technology Literacy"

Waiting Until 8th Grade

The Wait Until 8th campaign is a response to growing data about the potential harmful effects of social media and persistent screens on the mental well-being of children. Their website offers articles and other educational resources as well as a pledge by parents to delay smartphones until after 8th grade, when brains and self-image are more fully formed.

<https://www.waituntil8th.org/>

Sextortion: What to Do

If someone threatens to make private pictures or texts public unless you give them money or do what they say, this is "sextortion."

It is **NOT** your fault, & you are not alone. Thousands of children & teens have been misled by online predators. Sending \$ or gift cards does not make the threat stop.

For Sextortion: 1-800-CALL-FBI or report it online at tips.fbi.gov. Many predators are targeting dozens of children simultaneously. Your reporting can help make it stop for other kids, too.

If a nude photo of your child is on the internet, contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Their Take It Down program is a free service to remove nudes taken of anyone under age 18 <https://takeitdown.ncmec.org/>