Digital Citizenship & Media Safety

What's important is the quality of kids' content, how your kids engage with it, and balancing their time with and without screens in ways that are healthy and support their development.

Tips for Parents:
- Make sure device time is it high-quality and has age-appropriate content.
- Is screen time balanced with other parts of life like sleep, connecting with family/friends, and time outdoors?
- Watch for the following signs of poor screen time balance: anxious behavior, trouble falling or staying asleep, difficulty focusing on tasks, or intense mood swings.
- Is your child's behavior positive after using an electronic device to watch TV, play video games, or hang out online?

How to Create a Family Media Plan- Visit: Healthy Children.org- *"Family Tech Plan"*

1. It's a Family Affair:
- Create a family media plan with consistent rules to use for the entire family.
- Outline what, where, and how long kids can use their devices.
- Let kids share ideas and co-create rules, their input teaches critical thinking skills and self-regulation.
- Check in regularly on plan adherence and revise as needed.

2. Focus on high-quality content and programming
- Choose interactive and creative shows and games.
- Look for educational content.
- Make sure it is age-appropriate and engaging.

3. Watch and play together
- Co-viewing and co-playing have positive effects.
- Have conversations before, during or after screen time.
- Ask questions to support critical thinking.
- Showing interest in something your child likes can build relationship and trust.

4. Aim for balance between screen time and other activities
- If screens are getting in the way of homework, hobbies, social time, physical activity, or sleep, consider making changes to your family screen time rules.
- Ask your child how they are feeling when they use technology, if they aren't feeling emotionally or physically healthy, talk about some strategies that might help them feel better.

5. Lead by Example
- Model healthy, respectful device use.
- Behave positively when interacting with others online/practice self-control.
- Talk about how you feel when you use technology and strategies that make you feel more balanced.
- Consider putting away devices at mealtimes.
- Promote screen-free times and zones for the whole family.
- Limit distractions when interacting with others: sit phone down when someone is talking to you.
- Turn off background TV.

Recommended Healthy Habits for Children and Tweens

Age-2-5 Limit one hour per day of high-quality programs (American Academy of Pediatrics)

Age 6-9 There is no set time limit, but it is more important to start healthy habits regarding screen time.
- Choose educational shows and apps.
- Strive for balance of activities with and without technology.
- Prioritize sleep, time with friends and family and play time.

10+ - Tricky Balance
- Try not to be judgmental, rather show genuine interest in their viewing content/activities.
- Check in with how social media makes them feel.
- Share strategies/tips to manage their own time: Use screen time features on devices or turn off notifications.

Resources

Family Tech Planner Link - https://www.healthychildren.org/English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx?_gl=1*1s6wnqm*_ga*MjI2Njk3ODI2LjE3MDU1OTU1NDU.*_ga_FD9D3XZVQQ*MTcwOTQwODYwMS4yMC4xLjE3MDk0MDg4NjEuMC4wLjA.#/

Common Sense Kids and Tech: When to Get a Phone Link - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_gJpV8Co-s

Cyberbullying Research Center - https://cyberbullying.org/

Cyberbullying Technology Contract - https://cyberbullying.org/technology-use-contract.pdf

Tech/Privacy Questions To Ask you Kids - https://cyberbullying.org/Questions-Parents-Should-Ask.pdf

VR-Metaverse Safety Tips for Parents - https://cyberbullying.org/VR-metaverse-safety-tips-for-parents.pdf

Step by Step Guide for Parent Controls for most poplar platforms - https://www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/social-media/

Common Sense Media Guide on Parent Controls - https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/parents-ultimate-guide-to-parental-controls

American Academy of Pediatrics Stance on Parent Controls - https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/media-and-children/center-of-excellence-on-social-media-and-youth-mental-health/qa-portal/qa-portal-library/qa-portal-library-questions/parental-controls--digital-monitoring/

Benefits of Waiting Until 8ᵗʰ Grade for Smartphone ownership
https://www.waituntil8th.org/why-wait

Age of First Smartphone/Tablet and Mental Wellbeing Outcomes (A Report from 2023)
https://sapienlabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Sapien-Labs-Age-of-First-Smartphone-and-Mental-Wellbeing-Outcomes.pdf