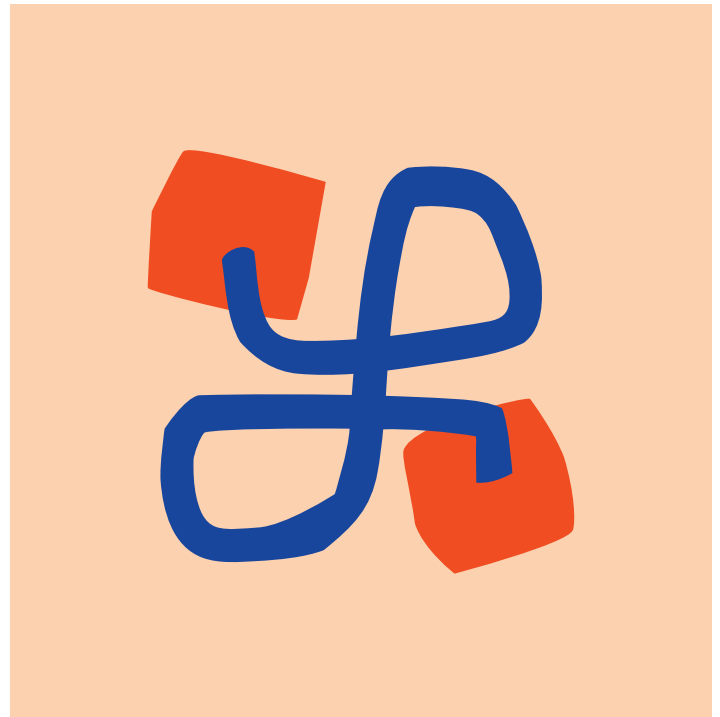


Technology



Your middle schooler might seem tech savvy, but they're not life savvy yet. They might want freedom online, but they're not ready for it. Don't make privacy something you're taking away from them, but rather something you're working toward as a team. Be clear about it and to the best of your ability, paint the picture that both of you have the same goal—an awesome experience with technology.

Your role during this phase is to...

Help them collaborate a plan so your child will respect limits & strengthen social abilities.

This guide is designed to help you meet your middle schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep

the end goal in mind: Technological responsibility means leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success.

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Tips to Help Middle Schoolers Navigate Technology

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future.

To sixth graders...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"I need your phone at 7pm every night." (Whatever your expectations may be, make them clear up front.)

"Let me find out more about that and I will let you know." (When they get a phone, share an account and research their apps.)

"I saw this video and it made me think of you." (Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." (Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)

"Which of your friends have a phone? What do they do on their phone?" (Know what kind of access they have when they are with their friends.)

"I will always love you no matter what you do and you can always come and talk to me." (Create a safe place to be honest.)

To seventh and eighth graders...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"Let me check the age restrictions first." (Most social platforms require a minimum age of 13 years.)

"Saw this video and it made me think of you." (Use technology to connect throughout the day—with no agenda.)

"We should respect people online as much as we respect them in person." (Talk about how devices sometimes escalate bullying.)

"Can you teach me how to use this app?" (Use mobile devices to connect: text, share, learn, and play together.)

"What you post is public, even if it feels private.

Remember

The middle school years are a great time to affirm their journey. Respect their growing need for privacy, but don't hesitate to establish boundaries. They won't always act like it, but they need you now more than ever as they enter the much bigger world of technology. They're now connected to people and information at the touch of a finger. The world of technology can open up a super fun time for your family but it can also bring stress and anxiety. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.

And it can be permanent." (Help them recognize potential risks related to the words, images, and videos they create.)

"What do you think is a healthy amount of time for you to spend online?" (Collaborate on expectations, rules, and consequences.)

"What should the password be?" (When you are ready, set up social media accounts together, and know their passwords.)

"Is it okay if I comment on your posts?" (Be considerate about how you engage with them online.)

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Enhance the Conversation

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities you can try:

Engage with technology. Every other week or so, challenge yourself to become familiar with a new aspect of technology—a filter, a GIF, an app, a game, etc. Engage with your middle schooler by sharing the new skills with them, and ask them to show you anything new they've learned, too.

Sign an Agreement. At theParentCue.org, you can find a cell phone agreement with some healthy guidelines you can establish with your middle schooler before (and even after) they get a phone. There are items for them to initial their agreement to, like where they will keep their technology at night, as well as items they can hold you accountable to, like not texting and driving! Use this agreement to lay out a plan of expectations for technology use that leads to increasing freedom.

Build others up. Technology is a tool that can be used for good or . . . well, evil. Challenge your middle schooler to say at least one positive thing about something or someone on technology three times a week. Help them learn to make a habit of using technology to build others up, and never tear them down. And make sure you're modeling this one as well!

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling

classic and innovative research with practical application.

To discover more ways to understand this phase, check out the Parenting Your... book series at parentcuestore.org.

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