



resources

digital *parenting*
COACH

Family Media Agreement

Yes, I know, I know. But before you go all Shakespeare on me with a “Let’s kill all the lawyers,” why don’t we take a closer look at what a family media agreement really is?

A family media agreement is an agreed family plan about how you, as a family, will deal with computers, smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, e-readers and so forth. Some parents may call this type of agreement a family media agreement; a family tech plan, a technology agreement, or a phone contract.

Whatever title you use, this agreement is still a useful plan to hold your children accountable and dare I say it – parents too!



BEFORE WRITING THE AGREEMENT

- Before you write that agreement, why not use a screen time log to chart out where your children need the most support? Similar to tracking your food intake to notice problem-snacking before you begin to change your eating habits, tracking your screen intake can also help you identify problem areas that need to be rectified in the family media agreement.
- Be sure to acknowledge and respect your tweens and teens “privilege” to use technology. I say privilege, rather than “right” to encourage responsible digital citizenship.
- Understand that electronic toys and online activities are very, very attractive to tweens and teens.
- Teens have a fantastic opportunity to start building the online identity that they want future employers or future schools to see.
- Social media has benefits such as social learning, self-esteem, fitting in, and networking, if handled correctly by your teen.



AS YOU WRITE THE AGREEMENT

- Take a peek at existing family media agreements and then cut and paste what will work for you.
- Enforce a mealtime and bedtime “curfew” for media devices, including cell phones.
- Decide whether the “curfew” will be in effect over the weekend, vacation, etc.
- Pick a moment when everyone is fed, calm and cooperative.
- Make sure that everyone is able to contribute to the conversation. Ask opinions on what would be an ideal day? An ideal dinner? An ideal evening on a school day? An ideal weekend? Etc.
- Establish reasonable but firm rules about cell phones, texting, Internet, and social media use.
- Consider how to handle tech when parents are not around. What type of guidelines should be put in place for visits with relatives, friends and sleepovers?
- Parents can encourage teens to use their screen time for good, for example, post pictures of their volunteer activities or engage in social causes and use their media presence to further their goals.

AFTER IMPLEMENTING THE AGREEMENT

- Don't be afraid to modify the agreement as your children outgrow certain limits and restrictions.
- Be prepared to listen, advise and find creative solutions.
- Parents should strive for balance in their family media plan so that young people can get outside and engage in other activities.
- Parents can use the media plan as a teaching moment regarding sharing images and data: photographs cannot be taken of others and shared online without asking permission first. And even though Internet can be fun and sharing "funny" images can be amusing, teens need to think before posting too much or share too much. #What is funny to one person can be considered horrific to another.
- Consider the three types of digital parenting styles:
 - digital enablers trust their kids online.
 - digital limiters raise their kids offline.
 - digital mentors guide their kids online.
- Whatever your parenting style, when your children ARE online, aim to cultivate their digital skills, foster online learning and boost their social and emotional learning.

For more ideas on family media agreements, please refer to:

- [Common Sense Media Family Toolbox](#)
- [Childnet](#)
- [IKeepSafe](#)
- [Healthy Children.org](#) (Create your Family media plan, media time calculator)
- [Sample Contract](#) (for iphone, but can be adapted to all. It's that good!)



contact information

Send me an email at **Elizabeth@digitalparentingcoach.com**.

Watch my two-minute tutorials on my YouTube channel: **[@digiparentcoach](#)**.

Reach out to me on social media :

     **[@digiparentcoach](#)**.

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