

Parents Guide to Kids and Media

Communication:

- You want your child to talk to you about any and all exposure or issues regarding media, so establish an open and honest environment up front.
- Be careful not to deflect any shame regarding accidental exposure to explicit material. (Much of the exposure to explicit material that occurs online happens accidentally initially.)*
- Set up regular times of dialogue about how media impacts their life and how they feel about it.

Managing Family Media:

- Balance starts with you. Model good habits regarding your personal media usage.
- Be intentional about how and when you view the various forms of media in your home.
- View media together as a family instead of individually in isolated areas.
- Be aware that frequent media exposure does affect child development and relational perceptions, especially in young children.*
- Limit usage time to 30 minute intervals and set up media free zones in your home.

Internet Safety:

- Have your child ask you before going online.
- Help your child understand the dangers found on the Internet. Explain that they should ask before clicking on pop-ups and sidebar advertisements.
- Talk together about the reality that almost all online content ends up on public access. This includes photos and videos kids produce and put on social media.*
- Help Kids understand they should never chat or talk with anyone online they don't know or haven't been given permission to connect with.
- Explain that they should never give personal information away online or through text.
- Put filters on all devices connected to the Internet.
- Avoid letting kids view the Internet in isolated places.
- Help your child understand that they need to have caution when viewing anything online at someone else's home.

*Cris Rowan-Pediatric Occupational Therapist, Pew Research, commonsensemedia.org

Social Media

- 75% of teens and pre-teens have personal profiles on social media sites. Many of these profiles include name, address and location*
- Limit time on social media.
- Make sure privacy setting is set to "on."
- Turn location setting to "off."
- Talk to kids about what is appropriate to post.
- Help kids understand that people most often post what they want others to think is happening in their life. Other people's "*highlight reel*," can often make the viewer feel inadequate and rejected and can contribute to depression and self-loathing.*
- Students should not use social media while studying or doing homework.

Smart Smartphone Use:

- Take time to carefully consider at what age your child is ready for a smartphone.
- Establish family safe rules for phone use and then enforce them consistently.
- Keep close tabs of each family members data usage on your phone bill.
- Be in charge of App purchases by knowing the password and keeping it confidential.
- Put filters on phones with Internet access.
- Establish regular touch-points with your kids about their phone habits.
- Set up a charging station outside your child's bedroom and don't let them sleep with their phone beside their bed.
- Set a password for their phone that you both know and make sure it locks after 3 minutes.

It's important to note that media/technology are our children's first language, and therefore, it is much harder for them to get free of its misuse than those of us who have lived portions of our life without it. Your efforts and consistency in helping bring balance and protection to your children now are foundational for their future.

*Commonsensemedia.org

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