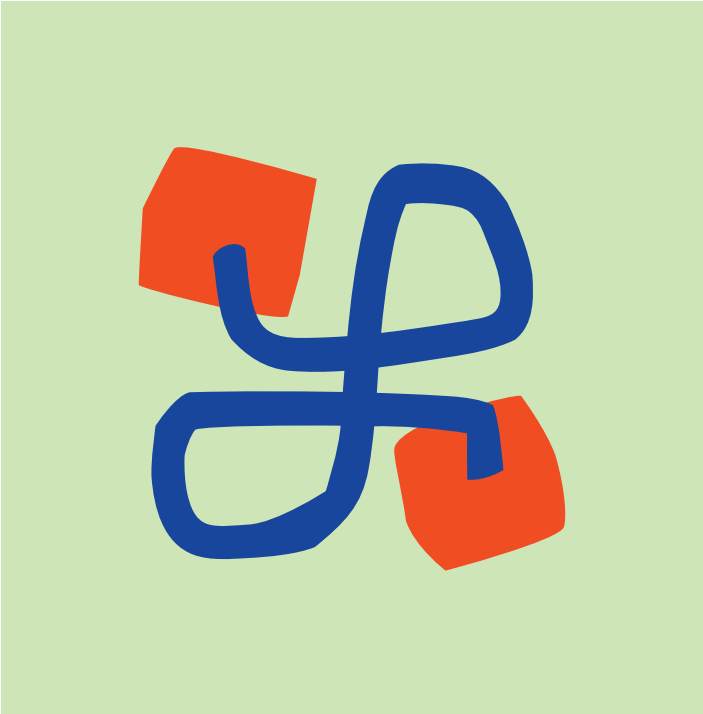
Technology



Are you blown away that your preschooler can swipe and click even faster than you can? How did they figure out how to find that Disney video in the sea of app icons on your screen? These keen abilities are exactly why it's a great time to start a conversation about the big world of technology. Your preschooler is a long ways from having their own phone and social media accounts, but every day they are watching, listening, and learning. They need you to guide their introduction into this world and set them up for success.

Your role during this phase is to...

Help them enjoy the advantages so your child will experience boundaries and have positive exposure.

This guide is designed to help you connect with your child in the phase they are in, by giving you some words to say to navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal for your preschooler 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 Preschoolers Navigate Technology

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

In the new baby phase...

(YOU) THINK THINGS LIKE

"Does it really matter if I forgot to record the last feeding in the app?" (Answer: No. As long as the baby ate, she doesn't care.)

"Is there anyone out there who can relate?" (Use technology to connect to other adults.)

"Look at this baby!" (Take as many photos as you like. You will enjoy seeing them later.)

Remember

The preschool years are the years you want to embrace their physical needs. They need to be physically close to you so use screen time as opportunities for 'lap time' where you can cuddle and share the experience. In this phase, your child thinks like an artist, and you can help them learn by engaging their senses through what they see and hear. Remember that screen time doesn't have to be isolating but can be used to stimulate great moments together. Stay informed. Stay involved. Start the conversation.

In the following preschool years...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"No juice by the computer."

"Tablets don't go in the bathtub."

"Let's turn off the TV now."

"I'm texting Grandma to ask a question." (Talk openly about technology as you use it.)

"I put my phone away when we are eating so we can talk to each other." (Set limits for screen time.)

"You need to ask before you use the computer." (Know when they are on a device and what they are using it to do.)

"Let me show you what a galaxy looks like." (Use technology to enhance your conversations.)

"Let me see what you did." (Show interest in what they do with technology.)

"It's time for you to put the tablet away."

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Tips to Help Preschoolers Navigate Technology

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

Enhance the Conversation

To enhance the conversation, here are a few conversation starters and activities your family can try:

Have screen-free time. Grab a bin or box that can become "home" for all technology when it's not in use. Help your preschooler decorate whatever container you choose. Show them how the technology goes inside the bin and how to remove it (if it requires taking off a lid, unzipping a zipper, etc.). Let them help you decide where to store the bin. Talk to your preschooler about when they can and cannot access the technology from its "home."

Create screen-free zones. Keep activities in your car, diaper bag, or purse that are not technology-related. It's so easy to default to a tablet or phone to entertain your preschooler when you're out and about. Giving your child another option may curb the impulse for technology to be your kid's go-to. Ideas: a coloring book and crayons, an Etch A Sketch, tracing paper and pencils, books, a cookie sheet with magnetic letters, a dry erase board with markers, magnetic puzzles, etc.

Teach with Technology. Technology isn't just for entertainment, it's an important tool for learning. Introduce early reading and math concepts through websites and apps that involve matching games or associating words with images. There are even some apps that will read books aloud to you and your child. Spend some time investigating some of the best, and get recommendations from friends.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.

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Technology

They might have not asked yet, but kids want to know when they'll be able to get their own phone, have their own social media profiles, and interact with friends online. Start the conversation about technology now, and begin setting clear guidelines. Kids know they can get their license at sixteen, which gives them something to look forward to. Set expectations about when they can get their 'technology license' too. Technology can be a positive experience as long as parents stay informed and involved.

Your role during this phase is to...

Help them explore the possibilities so your child will understand core values and build online skills.

This guide is designed to help you meet elementary-age kids 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 this 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 Elementary Schoolers Navigate Technology

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

To elementary-age kids (K-3rd)...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"Never use Google (or any search engine) alone."

"I don't know, but we can look that up together." (Use technology to enhance your conversations.)

"I'm texting Grandma to ask a question." (Talk openly about technology as you use it.)

"Siri doesn't always know what we are asking." (Turn on safe search, and don't let Siri answer your kindergartner's questions.)

"You have ten more minutes and then it's time to put the iPad away." (Set limits for screen time.)

"Let me see what you did." (Show interest in what they do with technology.)

"Never post a phone number or address without checking with me." (Kids are often naïve about sharing personal content with strangers.)

To elementary-age kids (4th-5th)...

SAY THINGS LIKE

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

"Can you help me figure out how to . . ."

"Tell me more about how that works."

"Have you ever seen someone say really mean things online?"

"Let me find out more about that and I will let you know." (Look up things like age limits, content ratings, and connection to strangers.)

"Can we play together?" (Make technology social by playing online games together.)

"Have you seen anything online that surprised you?"

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

"Sometimes people pretend to be someone they aren't online." (Caution against contact with strangers.)

Remember

The elementary years are full of possibilities and you want to engage their interests in a healthy way. Use technology to share things you enjoy. Stay curious about what they are seeing and learning, and help them to feel safe in bringing questions to you. When they push back against your rules and guidelines, engage them in talking about the 'why' behind the rules. Stay informed. Stay involved. Keep the conversation going.

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Tips to Help Elementary Schoolers Navigate Technology

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

Enhance the Conversation

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

Let them earn it: Reward what you want repeated by allowing your kid to earn technology time by using access as currency. For example, if your child reads for 20 minutes, they earn 10 minutes of technology time. If your child completes certain chores, instead of money, they're given minutes to use on approved electronic devices. If your child gets a good behavioral report at the end of the school week, they are given a set amount of time over the weekend to use their tablet or device.

Keep it social. Keep your kids' technology in plain sight. Designate a common area in the house where your kid(s) have permission to use their technology. Have them help you set it up with a comfy chair, lamp, charger, and any other supplies frequently used with their devices. As you set it up, talk about the importance of having rules and boundaries when it comes to using technology. Talk about all the ways keeping what happens online in plain sight keeps everyone safe.

Talk about the good and the bad. It may feel early, but it's important for your elementary schooler to know that there are people who use the Internet for good and for evil. Give your kid a "pop quiz" on online safety by providing them with a variety of scenarios and asking them how they'd respond. Praise them for answers that support your family's boundaries, and redirect when they don't.

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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. 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.)

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.

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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.

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!

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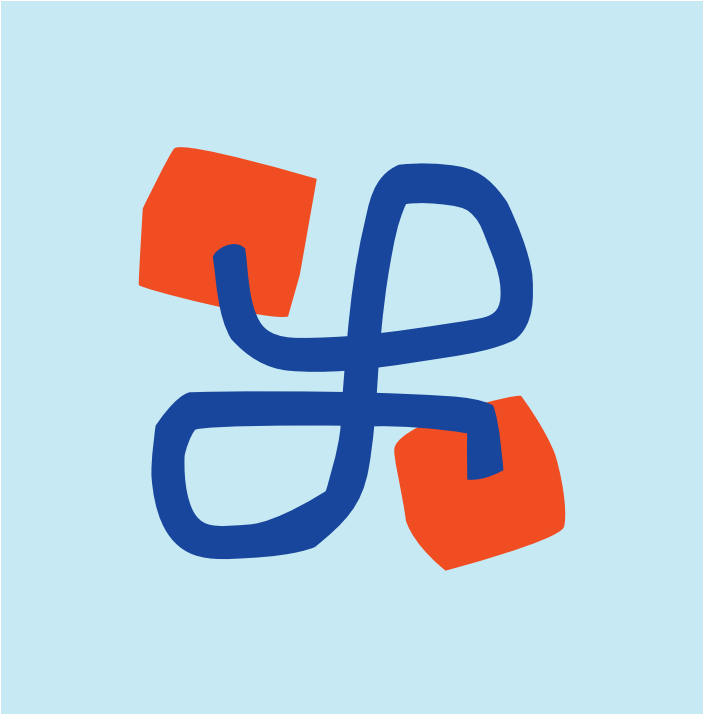
Technology



Is every kid ready for total privacy online just because they're in high school? Of course not—just like every 16 year old isn't automatically mature enough for a driver's license. But at this age, expect your child to push back on the concept of shared passwords and shared social media accounts. If over they years they've earned your trust and are ready for more freedom, consider giving it to them. If they haven't, discuss what they can do to move toward that. In a few short years they're going to jump out into the world. Give them space to practice that freedom now in the safety of your home.

Your role during this phase is to...

Help them expand their potential so your child will establish personal boundaries and leverage online opportunities.

This guide is designed to help you meet your high 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 this 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 High Schoolers Navigate Technology

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

To high schoolers...

SAY THINGS LIKE

"How do you use _____ ?" (Know what apps they have and how they use them.)

"Can you set up a playlist for me?"

"Who's your favorite person to follow?" (Discover who they listen to online.)

"What are some freedoms I have online that you don't have yet?" (Discuss plans for increasing freedom and responsibility over the next four years.)

"What you post is public, even if it feels private. And it can be permanent." (Help them recognize potential risks related to the words, images, and videos they create.)

"You cannot use your phone to text or call while driving." (Have clear expectations for cell phones and driving.)

"Let's split the bill 80/20." (Consider sharing the bill.)

"I'm so impressed with your Etsy shop."

"It would help me to share our calendars so we can coordinate meals."

"Did you know we could write letters to our Compassion® child online?" (Find ways to use technology to connect to a global mission.)

"Can I see what you've been creating lately?" (Show interest in everything from art to engineering to design to fan websites.)

"What's the best way for me to talk to you during the day?" (This will be more efficient as well as help you learn how they communicate)

"Look where I am today. I'm thinking about you!" (Share pictures with each other.)

"I'm so proud of you. Would it be okay if I post a picture to share your accomplishment?" (Model online respect.)

Remember

The high school years are the years to mobilize their potential. Your teenager is approaching adulthood with freedom on the horizon. The conversations you have today will help prepare them to make wise choices concerning technology for the rest of their lives. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.

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Tips to Help High Schoolers Navigate Technology

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

Enhance the Conversation

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

Leverage technology for good. Encourage your teen to find an existing cause they are interested in that uses social media or the Internet as a primary form of communication. Challenge them to think of ways they can use their own social media accounts to bring attention to the cause, and promote the organization or issue.

THINK about it. Help your high schooler maintain digital integrity by monitoring what they post. Make it clear that you will always "follow" and "friend" and "subscribe" to any social media app or site they're a part of. Talk about the permanency and ramifications of anything posted to the Internet. A good acronym to give them is THINK, and to ask, "Is what I'm posting ..."

- T – True?
- H – Helpful?
- I – Inspiring?
- N – Necessary?
- K – Kind?

If the post doesn't pass the "THINK" test, it's not worth posting. Write down this acronym and post it somewhere visible. Also assure them that if you have an issue with something they post, you will talk with them about it offline—not online.

Your technology world. While all of us know that no one inherently understands technology better than a teenager, as adults we do know a thing or two. Let your teen into your technology world. Maybe you use software to keep track of your finances or pay bills online. You can be a whiz at spreadsheets, putting together a presentation, or maybe you use a Bible app or health tracker. Share your technology skills, and in turn, let your son or daughter teach you some things as well.

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