Ways Parents Can Manage Kids' Technology Use

Here are some tips on how to manage your child's use of technology:

👍 Tip #1:

Develop a personalized family media plan. Experts recommend that you develop a consistent family media plan. It should include:

- Positive ways to use technology.
- What devices and screen activities are allowed in your home.
- Amount of screen time allowed each day.
- Times devices should be turned off at night.

Our Family Media Plan

A free family media planning tool is available on the American Academy of Pediatrics' website.

👍 Tip #2:

Designate device-free times and zones. Establish device-free times, such as mealtimes and family get-togethers. Also, think about which parts of your home will be device-free zones. For instance, it's a good idea to keep devices out of children's bedrooms. They might get into content that is unsafe and inappropriate.

👍 Tip #3:

Supervise device use. Your kids need to know that *you* are in charge of their devices, and that nothing they do online is private. Tell them that you'll read their texts, see their social media posts and access anything they share online to keep them safe. Maintain access to their passwords and accounts. Put blocks on content you feel is inappropriate. Remind your kids that it's your job to teach them how to manage technology responsibly.

👍 Tip #4:

Be consistent. Establish consequences for breaking family media rules, such as:

- Taking away a device for a certain amount of time.
- Losing a privilege.
- Doing chores to earn back a device.

Then, stick to your plan! To maintain consistency, be sure to get other adults in your child's life on board, too. That includes caregivers, grandparents and others. When your child is with them, they should respect and uphold your family device rules.

Interactive technology — such as social media, texting, video blogs and multi-player video games — can be very appealing to kids. Positive, supervised use of technology can help them discover new ideas. It can also help them connect with others and access educational information for school.

However, managing your children's digital media use can be quite challenging for you. Too much time on the wrong activities can negatively affect kids' schoolwork. Screen use impacts their health, activity levels and face-to-face communication skills. And it also disrupts family time.

While it may seem challenging, there are simple things parents can do.

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Tip #5:

Create device-free family traditions and activities. Research shows that kids need the adults in their lives to talk, read and play with them. This helps them grow up healthy and happy. What can you do as a family that doesn't involve devices?

- Go on nature walks.
- Read in cozy spots.
- Play sports and board games.
- Volunteer with a local organization.
- Work in the garden.
- Do craft projects.
- Go to the library.
- Talk and relax together.

Set aside special time when you can *really* focus on one another, without the distraction of devices.

Tip #6:

Be a good role model. Put down your phone, tablet or laptop when you are spending time with your kids. When you limit your own screen time, you teach them the importance of moderation. You also show your children that *they* are your number one priority!

The Impact on Health

Too much screen time can have a negative impact on physical and emotional health and lead to problems such as:

- **Sleep loss.** Using electronic devices in the hour before bed can disrupt sleep. And kids need eight to 12 hours of quality sleep each night to learn and thrive.
- **Depression.** Kids who overuse social media and compare their lives with others can feel bad about themselves.
- **Academic problems.** Kids who use more than one device while doing their schoolwork tend not to learn as well.

Other Health Concerns

Research has shown that too much screen time can also lead to:

- Lower psychological ability.
- Speech delays.
- Problems handling stress.
- Weight concerns.
- Addiction to online activity.
- Decreased interest in real, in-person relationships.

Guidelines for Managing Screen Time

Ask yourself:

- What devices do I want my child to have access to?
- Where will devices be allowed and where will they be off-limits?
- How much time will my child be allowed to use them?
- Will the same rules apply during weekends and school breaks?
- What content is appropriate for my child to access?
- How will I maintain consistency?
- What consequences will there be for misusing devices?
- What example am I setting through my own use of technology?

Without a doubt, technological devices are an important part of our world. By setting reasonable limits on their use, you can help your child become a responsible digital citizen, as well as a healthy, balanced, thriving kid!

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