Setting Device Usage Boundaries

Our responsibility is to help our children develop healthy habits and manage their device usage.

Technology has become an of our lives. Still, it is essential to recognise that excessive device usage can negatively affect our mental and physical well-being. It is, therefore, crucial to set device usage limits and establish healthy boundaries.

Time using devices

An effective way to manage device usage is to establish a set time limit for each device. Depending on your child's age and needs, you may choose to limit their usage to a certain number of a maximum of an hour to 90mins per day, or you may prefer to set specific times when they can use their device, such as after homework is complete or even include a total time limit that may consist of the time it takes to do their homework. If they finish within the allocated time, they get the balance for gaming on group chats with friends. It is also important to be consistent with these limits and enforce them.

Keep devices out of the bedroom.

Sleep is crucial for children's physical and mental health, and exposure to blue light emitted by electronic devices can disrupt their sleep patterns. Please encourage your child to use their device in a communal area, such as the lounge/family room or kitchen, where you can monitor their usage and ensure they are not staying up too late or answering messages in the group chat after they have been asleep for a few hours. We often poll the schools we work with, and children as young as Grade 3 say they receive messages in the middle of the night.

Setting a good example for your children is essential for healthy device usage habits. Kids often follow in their parent's footsteps, so it's necessary to establish healthy boundaries for your device usage. This means consciously limiting your screen time, especially during meals or family time, and avoiding the temptation to check your phone or tablet constantly. Being present and engaged is essential when spending time with your child, whether at the beach or waiting for a doctor's appointment. Don't let your device distract you from these moments; prioritise quality time with your children. Children learn by example.

In addition to setting device usage limits and establishing healthy boundaries, a few other tips may help parents manage their child's device usage.

These include:

Encouraging your child to engage in physical activities like sports, dance, gym, and play can help them develop healthy habits and reduce screen time. They don't need expensive after-school activities, even a bike ride or a swim if you can.

Devices have built-in parental controls that allow you to restrict access to certain websites or apps. Take advantage of these tools to ensure your child is not accessing inappropriate content or spending too much time on social media. (See our parental controls cheat sheet in our online program for parents).

With little ones, instead of using device time as a reward for good behaviour, consider offering screen-free activities such as playing board games, reading a book together, or going on a family outing.

Communication is vital to managing your child's device usage and keeping them safe. Have regular family discussions to establish expectations and boundaries for device usage. Please encourage your child to discuss any concerns about technology and its impact on their lives.

Encourage your child to engage in creative activities that do not involve screens, such as drawing, painting, or playing an instrument. This can help reduce their screen time and promote creativity.

Be mindful of your child's emotional well-being device usage can adversely affect your child's emotional well-being. Be aware of their moods and behaviors, and encourage them to take breaks from their devices when feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Ask if anything they see makes them anxious or scared, and discuss it with them.

Please encourage your child to set limits with their social media use and establish boundaries for when and how they use it. It is essential to monitor your child's online activity and talk to them so they know never to be afraid to speak up to ensure they are not engaging in risky behaviors or being exposed to inappropriate content.

Children may often argue that "everyone else has it." Still, as parents, we need to be aware of the dangers of giving in to this argument, as your child may not be emotionally ready for what they will see online. Remember that you are the parent; you are paying for the device; you get to set the rules.

It can be helpful to talk to other parents and get their perspectives on device usage. Share your concerns and discuss strategies for healthily managing device usage. Consider screen-free sleepovers.

Create a technology contract with your child that outlines the rules and expectations for device usage. This can help reduce arguments and ensure everyone is on the same page. This works with first devices to help teach boundaries. (they is a template in our online parenting program)

Get your child to present on cyber safety each week before getting their device. Then you will know if they know enough about what to do when things go wrong and need to block and report.

Encourage your child to interact face-to-face with friends and family instead of relying on social media or texting. This can help reduce their screen time and promote healthy communication skills.

While limiting screen time is important, technology can also be a valuable tool for learning and entertainment. Please encourage your child to use technology positively, such as for educational games or creative projects or, in some cases, to manage their health.

It's important to remember that, as parents, we have a responsibility to help our children develop healthy habits and manage their device usage. By setting clear boundaries and expectations, being mindful of our screen time, and promoting healthy activities and interactions, we can help our children thrive in today's digital age.