



youth service bureau

Social Media and Devices: Tips for Parents and Families

Is your family trying to find a better balance with social media, technology, and devices?
Do you have questions about what you can do to help monitor your kids' online time?
Here are some tips and suggestions you may want to try!

Finding a Balance

- **Show your kids how to use social media and their devices in positive ways.** Include a conversation about the pros and cons of social media and devices – this helps kids understand that they have a choice in how they utilize technology. An example could be using social media to raise awareness about an important issue that your child is passionate about.
- **Stay educated on trends.** New apps are coming out every day – what's popular today might not be tomorrow. Stay educated by asking your kids what they're doing online, and have them teach you how to use their devices and apps. We recommend checking out *Common Sense Media* (www.commonsensemedia.com) - they offer a wealth of information too!
- **Consider friending or following your child's online accounts.** This helps you keep an eye on what they're doing while learning more about the apps and social media platforms they like to use.
- **Set parental controls, but be aware of the limitations.** Because new apps and social media platforms are arriving every day, it can be hard to know what to control. Kids can be pretty tech-savvy, too, and may know how to get around parental controls. Above all else, being too strict with parental controls can lead to a lack of trust between you and your child. Have a conversation with your kids about what you'd like to block or control – and ask for their input too.
- **Create family accounts to use together.** If your child wants a social media account but you're not sure that they are ready for the responsibility, consider creating a family account with a password only you know. You can use the account together, explore the pros and cons of the site/app, and discuss expectations and rules for when they have their own account.
- **Periodically check back in to discuss Internet safety.** Your child may complain that they've heard it a million times before, but it's always a good idea to review your rules and expectations for online use, and how to be safe online. See some suggestions below!

Things to Remember about Passwords

- **Remind youth to NEVER share passwords with friends, only trusted adults.** Your child may think it's okay to share their password with a best friend or significant other, but be sure to discuss why that could be dangerous or lead to trouble.
- **Help kids create strong passwords.** Passwords should never contain names, addresses, or other identifiable information that may be easy to crack. A longer combination of lowercase, uppercase, numbers, and symbols is the best way to go.
- **Encourage kids to change their passwords often, and to mix them up.** If they use the same password for every account, encourage them to come up with a variety they can use. This heightens the level of security, so if one account is hacked, their other accounts are safe.
- **Consider knowing your child's passwords.** This may depend on your child's age and maturity level. Younger children may need help remembering passwords and may need more monitoring. As your child ages, you should discuss what level of privacy they're expecting and what you feel comfortable with as a parent.

General Internet Safety

- **Never respond to requests for personal information.** When in doubt, ask a trusted adult!
- **Steer clear of sites and apps that allow users to post anonymously.** You need to take responsibility for what you post online!
- **Remember that nothing is ever *truly* private, and content never *truly* disappears when deleted.** We all leave a 'digital footprint' that cannot be erased.
- **Never meet face-to-face with someone you meet online.** Always tell a trusted adult when you get these kinds of requests.
- **Tell a trusted adult if you see, read, or experience anything online that makes you uncomfortable, scared, or confused.** (And parents – remind your kids that you'll be open-minded and will try to stay calm if this should happen!)
- **THINK before you post!** Remember this acronym...

T – Is it True?
H – Is it Hurtful?
I – Is it Illegal?
N – Is it Necessary?
K – Is it Kind?