



HEALTHY WAYS OF USING TECHNOLOGY

It is important that we teach children to use technology in a healthy way and develop the skills and habits that will make them successful digital citizens. The Student Support Department would like to walk you through how to make technology work for your family; from 3 year olds who seem to understand devices better than us to teenagers who need some (but not too much) freedom.

Balance

Technology is here to stay and can be empowering for children of all ages, with tools to help them learn in fun and engaging ways. At the same time, we need to think about the possibility of them accessing inappropriate content online and the impact of too much screen time on healthy development. Consider the following scenarios:

- Children complain that they are bored or unhappy when they do not have access to technology
- Lots of resistance occurs when you set screen time limits
- Screen time interferes with sleep, school and face-to-face communication

If you notice these behaviours at home, it is time to find a more balanced relationship with technology, starting with renegotiating your child's access to it.

Quality

It is important that we evaluate the quality of our children's digital interactions. Ask yourself regularly:

- Are they accessing age appropriate content?
- Are the apps they are using safe? Do the apps allow interaction with strangers?
- Are your children old enough to use social media? This will also depend on your own rules at home. Instagram and Snapchat suggest a minimum age of 13 years old for example.
- Quality also applies to time. Establish tech-free times during the day.

Role Models

Nearly half of parents in one study reported technology interfering with interactions with their child three or more times on a typical day. Practising and demonstrating mindful use of technology ourselves will be the best way to teach children about unplugging. Key times to stay unplugged:

- During pick up or drop off from school. This is when they are more likely to tell you about their day!
- After coming home from work-time to reconnect with your family
- During meals, including when dining out
- During trips to the park or vacations when the focus is on family time
- While driving

Rules

As a family, you likely discuss chores and responsibilities and listen to everyone's opinion. Technology use should take the same approach, so everyone is on board with the expectations. Children and teenagers are less likely to reject rules if they have a role in creating them.

Parental controls

- Get into the habit of checking age ratings. This applies to movies, games and other apps
- The built-in parental controls in Windows (Microsoft Family) and Mac (Parental Controls) can help you set time limits and also limit apps and web usage

Cyber-bullying

It is essential to keep the conversation going with our children and teenagers regarding the dangers, and benefits, of technology. Revisit the issues periodically to keep the lines of communication open about cyber-safety; as your children grow, the issues that they face will continue to change.

- Ask open ended questions such as "what do you think of" or "tell me about"
- Talk about the 4P's: privacy, predators, pornography, pop-ups.
- Find out about their online friends: who are they?
- Tell them not to give out any personal details or post information that they would not want EVERYONE to know.
- Be up front: let them know that you can and will investigate files, online activities, review postings, etc

Do you have any questions or comments? We are here to support you! Contact the Student Support Department at:

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