

# Help Kids Balance Their Media Lives

From phones and tablets to streaming movies and YouTube, tech and media are everywhere. Kids love easy access to shows, games, and information. Parents and caregivers love that kids can learn on the go (and stay busy when dinner's cooking). But it's easy to overdo it when the phone never stops pinging and the next episode plays automatically. Families can keep media and tech use in check by following a few simple practices.

## Check out these 5 tips

1

### **Create screen-free times and zones.**

Help kids take breaks from tech by limiting screen time in bedrooms, during study time, or at the dinner table.

2

### **Try parental controls.**

Set content limits that make sense for your family. Alongside conversations about healthy media habits, use features such as content filtering, privacy settings, and time limits offered by the apps and platforms your family uses to help manage access and exposure to media.

3

### **Establish clear family rules.**

Decide together what kind of media and tech is OK -- and when it's OK to use it. A family media plan can help get everyone on the same page.

4

### **Watch and play together.**

Choose quality, age-appropriate media to enjoy with your kids. Visit [commonsensemedia.org](https://commonsensemedia.org) to find shows, games, and more.

5

### **Help kids identify healthy behaviors.**

Practice talking about feelings -- both physical and emotional -- during screen and non-screen activities.



# Help Kids Balance Their Media Lives

From phones and tablets to streaming movies and YouTube, tech and media are everywhere. Kids love easy access to TV shows, games, and information. Parents and caregivers love that kids can stay in contact while they explore their independence. But it's easy to overdo it when the phone never stops pinging and the next episode plays automatically. Families can keep media and tech use in check by following a few simple practices.

Check out these 5 tips 

1

## **Create screen-free times and zones.**

Help tweens and teens take breaks from tech by limiting screen time in bedrooms, during study time, or at the dinner table. Consider carving out regular family time when screens are either put away or enjoyed together.

2

## **Explore built-in digital well-being tools.**

Together with your kids, check out the features on their devices and in their apps that can help them use tech more intentionally. Consider turning off autoplay functions, limiting notifications from certain apps, using settings that turn off devices at a certain time each night, and more.

3

## **Model the behavior you want to see.**

Tweens and teens learn more from watching adult behavior than listening to lectures. Consider how you use your devices and other media, and make changes if your use doesn't follow your expectations for your kids.

4

## **Help kids identify healthy behaviors.**

Ask kids to notice their feelings, both physical and emotional, during screen and non-screen activities. Does their heart rate increase when their phone vibrates? Does their self-esteem dip after viewing a friend's Instagram feed? Do they feel good when they get positive feedback on a post? Encourage kids to keep the constructive activities and let go of the rest.

5

## **Understand how tech companies make money.**

Along with your tween and teen, research how digital devices, social media platforms, and apps and games get paid. Do they sell ads? Do they sell kids' data? Discuss why companies might want kids to spend more time on their platforms and what tricks they use to keep their attention.



# Family Media Agreement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will:

## ... take care.

- I will take care of the device I'm using and tell my family if it's broken, stolen, or lost. As a family, we have agreed on the consequences if I lose or break a device, and I understand those consequences.
- Unless I have paid for a device with my own money or it was a gift, I understand that the device belongs to the family member(s) who bought it.

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## ... stay safe.

- I will not create accounts or give out any private information — such as my full name, date of birth, address, phone number, or photos of myself — without my family's permission.
- I will not share my passwords with anyone other than my family. I will ask my family to help me with privacy settings if I want to set up devices, accounts, or profiles.
- If anyone makes me feel pressured or uncomfortable or acts inappropriately toward me online, I'll stop talking to that person and will tell a family member or other trusted adult about it.

\_\_\_\_\_

## ... think first.

- I will not bully, humiliate, or upset anyone online — whether through sharing photos, videos, or screenshots, spreading rumors or gossip, or setting up fake profiles — and I will stand up to those who do.
- I know that whatever I share online can spread fast and far. I will not post anything online that could harm my reputation.
- Whenever I use, reference, or share someone else's creative work online, I will give proper credit to the author or artist.
- I know that not everything I read, hear, or see online is true. I will consider whether a source or author is credible.

\_\_\_\_\_

# Family Media Agreement

## ... stay balanced.

- I will help my family set media time limits that make sense, and then I will follow them.
- I will be mindful of how much time I spend in front of screens, and I will continue to enjoy the other activities — and people — in my life.
- If using media or being online is making me unhappy or it's hard to stop, I will take a break and talk to a family member.
- \_\_\_\_\_

## ... communicate openly.

- I will talk to my family about what media I use and what I do online and answer any questions they have openly and honestly.
- I will tell my family if I'm struggling with media use, have made a mistake online, or need help.
- \_\_\_\_\_

## In exchange, my family agrees to:

- recognize that media is a big part of my life, even if they don't always understand why.
- talk with me about what worries them and why before saying "no."
- talk to me about my interests and embrace my world, including helping me find media that's appropriate and fun.
- \_\_\_\_\_

**X**\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNED BY ME**X**\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNED BY MY PARENT OR CAREGIVER