



SCREEN TIME AND CHILDREN

HOW TO GUIDE YOUR CHILD AND SET BOUNDRIES



MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL



FAMILY MEDIA PLAN CONVERSATION STARTERS

Conversation Starters

Family Media Plan

Digital media has become part of our daily lives. Families need to understand the benefits and risks of digital media.

Creating a family media plan is an excellent way to do this. A family media plan can help families live with their devices in a healthy way, to understand each other's perspectives, to avoid fighting, and to prevent unhealthy habits.

We think it is a good idea to sit together as a family and talk about these things. Listen to each other's needs, learn about what each of you likes, and where you spend your time online. Then you can talk about the questions below to make a family media plan that will work in your home.

Discussion questions for the whole family

- ✓ What do you love doing online? How do you spend your time online?
What bothers you online? What do you wish you could cut out of your media diet?
- ✓ Do you ever find yourself sucked in, watching, or consuming mindlessly?
When and where (in what online neighborhood) does that happen? How do you deal with it?
- ✓ What do you like doing that has nothing to do with your online life?
- ✓ How do you make time for these hobbies? What does the perfect balance for your family look like?

Screen-Free Areas & Device Bedtime

Screen-free areas (no-technology areas) are important for creating safe and healthy media habits.

Incoming messages and notifications can interfere with rest and can be tempting distractions when we should be sleeping.

Use of devices in private spaces gives children opportunities to share inappropriate things and potentially view inappropriate and/or pornographic content.

Every family has different routines and needs, but deciding on a time as a family when devices are shut off for the night is a great way to ensure that screens do not interfere with sleep.

Agreeing on screen-free areas can also help limit children's access to inappropriate and/or pornographic content.

Recommendation

To prevent sleep disruptions, and to limit sharing and seeing inappropriate and/or pornographic content, we recommend the following:

- ♥ There should be no tablets, computers, mobile phones, televisions, or gaming devices where adults or children sleep;
- ♥ All devices should be charged outside of the bedroom in a central location where they are difficult to use at night;
- ♥ For some children, it may be a good idea to charge devices in a parent's bedroom to deter access at night.

Discussion questions for all of the family

- ✓ What are some areas in your house that you would like to keep screen-free at all times?
- ♥ It may be a good idea to think about some areas where devices should not be allowed, such as bedrooms, bath, and toilet areas.
- ✓ Where will you charge the devices to discourage night-time use?
- ✓ What is a logical time for each member of your family to turn off media for the evening? This might be different for each family member.

Screen-Free & Family Times

Using individual mobile devices can also interfere with conversations and family connections. Making certain times of every day screen-free time can help families connect and develop healthy routines.

Discussion question for the whole family

- ✓ What are some times in your routines that you would like to be free of personal devices or media?

Some times to consider:

- ♥ Family mealtime, movie night, game night, walks, hikes, picnics etc;
- ♥ Driving or cycling;
- ♥ Riding in the car, except for long trips;
- ♥ One hour before bed.



Citizenship & Safety

Thinking about citizenship and safety should not stop when we use electronic devices. Interactions online and offline can have real-world consequences, both negative and positive. Many children say that they do not tell their parents if they have negative experiences online. Your children may not share their mistakes, or may actively hide them from you if they think you will take their devices away from them, or stop them from using the internet. If they cannot use their device, children may feel they are not part of friendships or their social life. It is important to recognize that not being able to use digital media can feel like a massive loss for a child who uses it for social connection.

Recommendation

To help develop a healthy attitude towards online culture, we recommend that you

- ♥ Regularly and often tell your children what you expect from them;
- ♥ Show how you use the internet in a positive way;
- ♥ Share age-appropriate stories with your children about some of the dangers that exist online;
- ♥ Take an interest in the things your children like online. For example, play games with them;
- ♥ Visit your children's online neighborhood(s) and talk about their online communities;
- ♥ Be open and discuss your feelings about any offensive or problematic material your children share with you;
- ♥ Tell your children about mistakes you've made on- and offline, and about how you solved the problem or changed your behavior.

Discussion questions for the whole family

- ✓ What should you do when you make mistakes, are not sure about things online, or feel bad about what you have experienced?
- ♥ Share the content with a parent, mentor or teacher you trust as soon as possible.
- ✓ How should you react when someone shares mistakes?
- ♥ React with compassion/understanding and focus on how to repair the damage;
- ♥ Talk about the experiences or material and how it does or does not fit into your family's values;
- ♥ Ask school, counselors, or teachers for advice if needed.

SCREEN TIME

SCREEN TIME

1

LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!



Sit down together with all family members

Answer the following questions and write down your answers.

- ✓ When and where does your family use screens?
- ✓ In the morning? In the evening?
- ✓ At the table?

- ✓ Do children have screen time alone?

- ✓ Is screen time a conflict in your home ?

- ✓ Are there screens in the bedrooms?

- ✓ Where do you charge your devices overnight

- ✓ As a family, what would you like to change?

- ✓ Why?

SCREEN TIME

2

FAMILY RULES



A LITTLE REMINDER

- ✓ It is necessary to establish rules
- ✓ When children participate, they accept the rules more readily.
- ✓ The rules must be understood and respected.
- ✓ The rules need to be noted and visible to all.

A few ideas..

- ✓ Always ask before using a screen.
- ✓ No screens during mealtimes.
- ✓ Screens will be turned off an hour before bedtime.
- ✓ Maximum screen time recommended for 6-9 year-olds: 30 minutes

THREE MANDATORY RULES

- ✓ Apps and games are chosen together (adult + child).
- ✓ Screens are used with an adult present.
- ✓ Parental controls are in place.

On the next page, you will find space
to create your own family rules. 😊

SCREEN TIME

FAMILY RULES



I agree to respect the family screen time rules.

Signature (parent or parents)

Signature (child or children)

3

SCREEN TIME

SET AN EXAMPLE

A LITTLE REMINDER

Children learn through imitation. Setting an example is a powerful way of educating them on healthy screen use. Telling them what to do is not enough.

A few ideas . . .

- ✓ For example : Read a newspaper at the table. Don't check your phone or emails.
- ✓ It is important that you respect your own rules
- ✓ Do what you expect your children to do



Be available
for your children.
They need attention.



SCREEN TIME

4

HOW ARE YOU DOING?



Bring all family members together again.

- ✓ Everyone must be able to express themselves freely
- ✓ Make this a positive moment of sharing.
- ✓ Children love sharing what they do online. Talking about screen time and taking stock should be done regularly.
- ✓ Which rules were you able to respect?
- ✓ Were there rules that were difficult or not possible to respect?
- ✓ How did you feel?
- ✓ Was it difficult? If yes, what was difficult?
- ✓ Do you think these new rules helped your family? How?

Decide which rules work and which rules might need to be adapted to meet your families personal needs. Take note of the changes. Hang the amended version in plain sight.

Find a way to congratulate your child for the rules they were following. Celebrate your success as a family. 😊



ALLISON OCHS

Allison is an American/Swiss social pedagogue/worker, author, lecturer, teacher, and consultant. Allison has held a position as a social pedagogue/worker, teaching courses on empathy and dealing with difficult situations at the CAU Hospital Kiel, Germany, and she has also worked in a teen transition home in Kiel, Germany. In Switzerland, Allison has both taught languages and cultural studies, and held leadership positions in both public and private schools. Allison's volunteer work ranges from working in an orphanage in Mexico to serving on the board of trustees at the International School of Amsterdam.

With her team of international educators, Allison has created Edit Books and Edit Curriculum for digital citizenship. She is the owner and president of Edit change management Sarl, and Edit books. The Stories for social emotional learning and digital citizenship books are available for primary and middle/high school.

Allison is also an affiliated consultant with the Council of International Schools and has collaborated with the Swiss Federal Institute of Technical in Lausanne (EPFL) developing a pedagogical series of stories about digital citizenship for primary school, the Oscar and Zoe series. Allison's first book was published by Amsterdam University Press in 2019. *Would I have sexted back in the 80s?* gives hands-on advice to parents and educators on how to deal with raising teens in a digital world.

Relevant, fun, and engaging are adjectives associated with Allison's workshops. Making sure that students learn while creating a safe haven for them to discuss their online world is at the core of her work. With adults, Allison shares mistakes she has made and offers solution in a shame-free environment.

When she is not on the road sharing stories with teens, parents, and teachers, you will find Allison either in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, or a small town just above Lake Geneva, Switzerland, enjoying family life with her husband and three children.

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