Tips for Creating a Family Technology Use Plan

In a world where children are "growing up digital," it's important to help them learn about healthy technology use so they remain safe and healthy.

> **Aim for a balanced approach to technology by deciding as a family how much screen time is appropriate and what "screen-less" activities are important.**

▶ When used thoughtfully and appropriately, digital media can enhance daily life.

▶ When used inappropriately or without thought, technology can displace many important activities, such as face-to-face interactions, family-time, outdoor-play, exercise, unplugged downtime, and sleep.

▶ Limiting children's use of devices can also help ensure they are well rested and able to attend school regularly, on-time, and ready to learn.

▶ Consider making a family plan to ensure that technologies work well for you and your children.

Some ideas for creating a family technology use plan are outlined on the following pages.

SCREEN FREE ZONES

CONSIDERATIONS

▶ **Keeping screens away from the dinner table and limiting technology use when visiting others helps to encourage important conversations and build invaluable relationships. Keeping devices outside the bedroom is important for many reasons.**

- Incoming messages and calls will interfere with sleep; both audio and vibrating alerts can wake up children and teens.
- It is important to help children avoid the temptation to use or check devices when they should be sleeping – during the night or too early in the morning.
- Light emitted by TVs or mobile screens can affect the quality of sleep.

OUR PLAN

Mobile devices and TVs are not allowed in the following screen-free zones:

☐ At the table when we eat

☐ When we are visiting grandparents and other family members

☐ In bedrooms

☐ Other _____

SCREEN-FREE TIMES

CONSIDERATIONS

▶ **Using a mobile device or watching TV before bed can interfere with sleep. Too much screen time can also distract from other important activities, such as interacting with others, staying fit, and getting ready for school.**

OUR PLAN

We will limit our screen time to _____ hours per day.

If we are using screens in the evening, we will:

☐ Turn the brightness on the screen down

☐ Not play games or watch videos or TV shows that are intense or scary

Mobile devices and TVs are not allowed:

☐ One hour before bedtime

☐ At dinner time

☐ At breakfast when we should be getting ready for school

☐ Other _____

SCREEN-FREE SICK DAYS

CONSIDERATIONS

▶ Research shows that children and teens often want to stay home from school so they can use their devices.

OUR PLAN

Mobile devices and TVs are not allowed:

☐ When we stay home from school

SCREEN "SHOW AND TELL" TIMES

CONSIDERATIONS

▶ For safety reasons, it is important to talk about the kinds of things your children are exploring online. It is even better to review their online activities together to learn what they are watching, reading or playing.

OUR PLAN

We will sit together to discuss what we are doing with technology:

☐ At least once a week

☐ Every Saturday morning

☐ Other _____

ACCEPTING SCREEN MISTAKES

CONSIDERATIONS:

▶ Many people accidently click on an inappropriate website or video, or join an online activity before knowing it is wrong. Encouraging honesty and being patient when that happens will help children be open and honest about their technology use, which is critical for safety reasons.

OUR PLAN

If you accidentally make a mistake online, you will:

☐ Notify us immediately

☐ Avoid making the same mistake a second time

☐ Learn from the mistake to avoid a similar problem in the future

☐ Other _____

Aim for a balanced approach to technology by deciding as a family how much screen time is appropriate and what "screen-less" activities are important (such as listening to or playing music, enjoying time in nature, reading, tossing a ball around, etc.).

Try discovering together what works best for your family.