



Signs Your Child or Teen May be Overusing Technology

Adapted from www.commonssensemedia.org

**It seems that everyone
loves using technology.**

Our phones, devices, and computers help us access information more and more easily, and almost all of us enjoy taking a break from our work and responsibilities to watch TV, play video games, and surf the Internet.

But too much screen time is an increasing problem.

Here are a few warning signs that technology use may be a concern.

Be careful if children ...

- ☐ **Are not doing other important activities because of their screen use. Are they ...**
 - Not getting enough sleep because they are using screens? Some children become “tired but wired;” they are tired, but they can’t sleep, like when they have had too much sugar or caffeine.
 - Not attending to their own health and well-being, such as not brushing their teeth or showering because they are glued to their computer?
 - Not eating at the table with the family, because they are watching TV or gaming instead?
 - Not doing their schoolwork or homework?
 - Missing school so they can stay home to use screens?
 - Becoming withdrawn from family and/or friends?
- ☐ **Are uncomfortable or angry when they can’t access the internet or use their devices. Do they ...**
 - Find it hard to stop using screen media?
 - Become overly upset / throw a tantrum when they are told to shut down their devices? Does asking them to take a break turn into a battle?
 - Constantly talk about their devices, even when they aren’t using them?
- ☐ **Regularly use their phone at the dinner table, while other people are talking, or even when they are driving.**

- ☐ **Seem to be happier in their virtual world than they are in real-life interactions. Do they ...**
 - Seem unmotivated by anything other than technology. (Socializing with others is critical for learning empathy, developing non-verbal communication skills, and learning to interact with a diverse range of people)?
 - Rarely talk about anything other than their screen media?
 - Seem uninterested in participating in other forms of entertainment – even fun, exciting opportunities?
 - Prefer to spend time alone watching TV, playing video games, or surfing the internet, rather than doing things in the outside world?
- ☐ **Want to use screen media more and more all the time.**
- ☐ **Are starting to be sneaky about screen time – meaning they are developing an unhealthy relationship with technology. Do they ...**
 - Use devices in secret, even when they have been told to put them away?
 - Sneak devices into their bedroom or after lights out?
 - Play games or surf the net when they tell you they are doing homework?
 - Try to hide what they are looking at or playing online?
- ☐ **Seem to rely on screen media to help them feel better when they have had a bad day. Do they ...**
 - Use screens as a mood booster when they are feeling sad?
- ☐ **Have blurry eyes, head-aches, back pain, or other symptoms of sitting in front of a screen too long.**

Too much screen-time is bad for our physical, mental, and emotional health.

It can be difficult to start limiting screen time. However, it is worth the effort to try to prevent your child or teen becoming addicted – and missing out on other healthy habits as a result.

What can you do if you have concerns?

- ☐ Your child's total screen time might be greater than you realized. Start monitoring it. Keep track of the hours they spend online.
- ☐ Remember that the amount of time we use screens is important, but so is the impact. Some people are negatively affected by less or more time online. Think about how it is impacting on your child's relationships, health, and behaviours.
- ☐ Talk to your child or teen about the importance of sitting less and moving more.
- ☐ Don't let your kids eat in front of a screen. This habit also encourages mindless munching – often on unhealthy foods.
- ☐ Work with your child or teen to create reasonable boundaries around technology use, and hold each other accountable.
- ☐ Create new household rules and routines, and role model putting down devices.
- ☐ Keep the TV off when you aren't deliberately watching something. Background TV still catches children's attention.
- ☐ Be pro-active in providing opportunities to do other fun things. Try to engage your child or teen in extra-curricular activities. Go on family outings ... walks, bike rides, etc.
- ☐ Talk to other families. How can you work together to help kids step away from their computers and put away their phones?
- ☐ Gradually make small changes in your child's activities to reduce screen time and its potential effects.

Find out what supports your child's school can provide. How do they support students in managing their technology?

