

Technology Use Age 16 Summary

Why Examine Technology Use?

Becoming intentional about your teen's daily technology use can influence how they develop a healthy relationship with technology and its role in their life. Looking for ways to experience and learn together about how to use devices wisely contributes to their development.

STEP
1



Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

Writing down notes on your teen's responses to the following questions will help you when you develop rules or routines for device use.

- What are your hopes and goals for your time after school, weekends, or summer days?
- Do you get to do everything you want to do in your free time – or connect with the people you want to communicate with (friends, family), or are there things you miss out on?
- What roles do you want your devices to play in your life? (i.e., learning, entertainment, connection with friends, resume building)?
- Do you tend to want screen time when you experience a particular emotion (e.g., sadness, frustration, anger)?
- What other things would you like to try to calm down and feel better when you have this feeling? Can we talk about it, go outside, listen to music, or ride bikes?

Trap: Be sure you talk about technology use at a calm time when you are not stressed or upset!

STEP
2



Teach New Skills

Model healthy technology habits.

- Because technology plays a significant role in our family's life, modeling how we use technology teaches our teens more than our words ever could. How are you disciplined about technology? Do you have rules for putting the laptop down and storing work away at the end of the day? Do you have times when you turn off or leave behind your phone? Do you charge at night in another room? Share those practices with your teen so that they understand that it's not only children who have to manage devices and cultivate healthy technology habits.

- Notice how you cope with challenges and uncomfortable feelings. Do you tend to use technology as an “escape”? Talk with your teen about how you are feeling and what you will do to calm down rather than tune out.

Research content together before viewing.

- Our teens need to learn to become their very own media analysts. Download an app or visit a media review site together. Get into a habit of reading together about new video games, television programs, movies, and applications before selecting them to view. If they are not developmentally appropriate, move on to something that is.
- Research any topic you are curious about on the internet together and review the keywords to use and the quality of the sites that come up in your search. Discuss the quality and reliability of the site. For example, does the site provide opinion-based information or facts and research-based information?
- Discuss the roles of technology in your home.

Trap: Online time should not replace time outside playing with friends. Exposure to nature, exercise, play, and social interaction are critical factors in your teen’s healthy development.

Trap: Online time should be different from reading time since this is a necessary time to cultivate positive reading habits and skills. Be sure you leave judgment of book choices behind and only encourage their reading. Nonfiction and graphic novels are excellent choices if they interest your young reader. If it’s safe content for teens, offer your support and interest.

Trap: Not all media is trustworthy! Fake news, images, and videos are interspersed with real media. Making your teen aware of the fact that there are fabricated news stories is an essential part of training them to use critical judgment when viewing media.

STEP

3



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me...” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity. When your teen learns a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say, “Show me you know what we’ve agreed to with our devices - when we’re going to use them and when we’ll power them down.” This can be used at night before going to sleep.
- Take a “device break”. During device time, maybe at a natural breaking point, call “device break.” Practice moving away briefly. Get a drink of water. Walk outside and sniff the fresh air. Get a drink of water.
- Recognize effort using “I notice...” statements like, “I notice how you searched the media site before watching a new program. That’s using your critical media thinking skills!”
- Proactively remind your teen to help them be successful. The challenges of daily routines recur day after day. Remind in a gentle, non-public way. You can whisper in their ear, “Remember what time it is? What’s next we don’t want to miss out on?”

Trap: Resist the temptation to scold. If you've had a habit of fewer rules and routines around devices, it can take time to get into a new habit. Have patience and invest in reminding and recognizing positive steps forward, even if small. It may take a few consistent weeks of repetitive routines for your teen to own and do them entirely without prompting.

STEP
4



Support Your Teen's Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude. Show confidence that your teen can learn anything with time and practice (because they truly can!). Your comments and reflections will matter significantly in how competent they feel to meet any learning challenge, especially when learning to manage technology in healthy ways!
- Ask key questions like:
 - "It looks like you're on screens longer than we agreed. Can I help you set the alarm? Are there other ways you can keep track of your time?"
 - "Are you feeling good about what you are viewing? If not, how can we find content that will make you feel better if you feel fearful or sad?"
 - "What did you get to do today that you would have missed out on if you had stayed on screens longer?"
- Stay engaged and go lo-fi together! It can motivate your teens when they see you reading your favorite book alongside or visiting the library or local bookstore together (with devices powered down!). Invite them to play a board or card game. Cook together. Listen to music.

Tip: Keeping a safe, open dialogue about social media means that if your teen encounters a problem, they are more likely to bring it to you. Be ready to listen when your teen is ready to share.

STEP
5



Recognize Efforts

- Recognize small steps along the way. Don't wait for significant accomplishments—like the full bedtime routine going smoothly—to recognize effort. Remember that your recognition can work as a tool to promote more positive behaviors. Find small ways your teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, after you've completed your bedtime routine, snuggle and read before bed. Or, in the morning, once you're ready for school, take a few minutes to listen to music together.

Trap: It can be easy to resort to bribes when recognition and occasional rewards are underutilized. If parents or those in a parenting role frequently resort to bribes, it is likely time to revisit the five-step process.

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