

Tips for Parents/Caregivers on How to Create Healthy Technology Habits

Please try to follow these guidelines recommended by Canadian and American doctors as an overuse of technology can impact vision, hearing, wrists, neck, back and mental health. 1 in 5 kids are cyberbullied (online bullying behaviors) in Canada.

Developmental Age	How Much?	Non-violent, pro-social TV	Non-violent, pro-social video games	Violent video games	Handheld devices	Online violent video games and/or pornography
0-2 years	none	never	never	never	never	never
3-5 years	1 hour/day total tech	okay	never	never	never	never
6-12 years	2 hours/day total tech	okay	limit to 30 minutes/day	never	never	never
13-18 years	2 hours/day total tech	okay	limit to 30 minutes/day	limit to 30 minutes/day	okay	never

How do I do that?

- **Make a list of activities your child/youth can do besides technology (post this somewhere)** and try to do these activities first: lego, read or look at physical books, toys, outdoor time, playing with containers, boxes, doing art, playdates, playing games with kids, pets, sports, music, go to a friend's house etc.
- **Teach them and give them regular chores** as this helps with their self-esteem (self-esteem comes from doing things on your own) Even young children can help with meal prep.. there are child-safe utensils you can buy for this. They can rip the lettuce, and set the table. They can dust, wash dishes, etc.
- **Get kids involved in tech activities that involve several people in person..** make a movie, watch a movie, Stopmotion, share and talk about youtube videos in person, video gaming together so you take breaks together etc.
- **Set boundaries with technology (for everyone)** – not in bedrooms (impacts sleep), not in bathrooms (germs and privacy), not at mealtimes (helps to regulate meals and creates more family connection and not in car (even tv's) unless going on long road trip (long term safety-not texting while driving and builds family connection).
- Get in **20-20-20** routine with screens that are close up (every 20 minutes we should be looking away from screens and giving our eyes a break to avoid computer vision syndrome). Use timers on devices, stove timer or buy a timer.
- **All tech goes away an hour before bed** (even tv) as then they are not using tech to help them fall asleep.

- Teach children how to **connect to their feelings** and how to express them in a healthy way: it is okay to cry, calm or relax with music, books, a walk, a cuddle etc. It is okay to be angry – go for a walk, go to ocean and throw rocks into water, squeeze playdoh or clay, draw out feelings. Talk about feelings, role model by talking about your feelings. Teach what feelings may feel like in your body (increased heart rate, butterflies in tummy, red face etc.)
- Use **Parental controls** for Wifi (Shaw Blue Curve, Telus, The Circle, OurPact, Bark) and gaming consoles to create a routine (You can look up how to do this for a Playstation, Xbox etc) It goes on at this time and shuts off at this time. This takes away arguing or having to constantly remind them to get off technology.
- **Teach the behaviors you want to see** without use of technology – how to behave in a restaurant (can read a book, color etc. if needed), how to help their parents with chores etc.
- **Co-view, play with kids online or check out apps, video games, tv shows and movies beforehand:** Kids/Youth cannot unsee what they have seen. If they are online they can connect with strangers and be exposed to inappropriate content. Many kids get invites to view porn through their gaming consoles. Many kids play online games like animal jam or Roblox and chat with strangers or are bullied online.
- **Tell your kids to tell you if they see something inappropriate online** or if something happens (even if they did something wrong and made a mistake, and that their devices won't get taken away and they won't get in trouble that this is a way of learning how to be a good digital citizen. **78% of kids have viewed porn by age 18.**
- **Consider joining or creating a Wait Until the Eighth Grade movement** - Parents decide together to hold off on getting kids phones so people do not feel left out.
- **When you get a cell phone, start with a flip phone then as they show you they can handle that go to a basic phone, then one with apps.** You can change a smart phone back to a basic phone if needed.

Sincerely,

Shannon Husk

Prevention and Community Engagement Service Provider

<https://www.bcreponsiblegambling.ca>

Registered Clinical Counsellor

250-588-3861