

Don't Let Tech Take Over Your Family!



- **Establish "screen-free" locations and "screen-free" times of day.** Kids don't need devices to be accessible to them at all times. They need to learn to deal with boredom by talking or doing something more constructive.

- **Don't use technology as a reward.** First, if you're limiting usage to one hour, it doesn't make sense to increase tech allowance for good behavior; second, technology is so addictive that using it as part of a reward system is asking for a battle when you end up taking it away as punishment.

- **Don't use video games as a substitute for supervision.** Although this is something most parents have done, remember that it undermines your management plan and it's very difficult to transition away from excessive time spent on technology, especially gaming.

- **No kids should be left alone in their room or basement with friends online.** Preteens and teens need close parental supervision.

- **Promote Positive Technology.** Steer kids away from passive, mindless gaming and toward activities that will help them learn and be creative like reading books, making videos, taking pictures, doing art projects, and learning to code.

- **Expect resistance!** Kids tend to verbally oppose limits and structure while really wanting and needing it.

- **The best antidote** for kids' excessive screen use is a schedule with activities that incorporate creative exploration.

Tips for Specific Age Groups

Children under age 7

- No devices, period! At least until age 5.
- Some Leapster™ education devices in short doses are OK, but only after age 5.
- Don't use screens or portable devices as a way of managing behavior. During busy times or trips in the car, use alternatives such as a bag of toys, word games, or transportable creative projects.



Teenagers 13 to 18

- Know your kids' passwords. Keep a record of them.
- Insist on access to all their pages and practice random checking. Learn about the rules of Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Tumblr, etc.
- Keep a list of who your kids are interacting with. Do not let them interact with strangers.
- Use programmed online parental controls for blocking and monitoring. Be sure to use the most updated versions.

Children 7 to 11

- No online gaming.
- No social media.

Children 11 to 13

- Educate yourself about interactive gaming. Parents need to be informed. Don't allow gaming unless your kids are heavily supervised with chat off.
- No social media. It's illegal!

What About TV?

Although TV doesn't compete with gaming and online use – especially for kids who are already into technology – you still should monitor TV-time. Allow it in 1 or 2-hour blocks with no more than 3 hours a day. Check the Common Sense Media guidelines.

Dr. Kate Roberts

Connect with Dr. Kate:

facebook Dr. Kate Roberts

twitter @DrKateParenting

Dr. Kate Roberts is a psychologist and parenting coach who practices on the North Shore. Go to her website, register to be on her e-mail list and download a complete tech management guide.

For more information contact Dr. Kate:

kate@drkateroberts.com

www.drkateroberts.com



These guidelines are intended for parents who are considering tech management in their homes. Every family and child is unique; these tips need to be applied with that in mind. Parents should be the ultimate deciders of what is best for their family and child.

Kids are using 7-plus hours of tech per day. This raises concerns for lots of parents who may fear that they'll have little or no control over their children's technology use when school's out. **Don't let tech take over your family!** If you feel like you haven't got the skills and strategies required to take charge and make changes, here are some tips to help you out.

Tell-tale Signs of Too Much Tech!

Parents should always oversee their child's technology use. Use your best judgment to spot warning signs of overuse. Some behaviors to watch out for:

- A child asks to use technology upon waking or as soon as he or she gets home.
- A child becomes negative and belligerent when a parent attempts to limit technology use.
- A child begins sneaking tech use or lying about it.

If a parent notices any of these behaviors it may mean that their child's technology use is a problem. Consider eliminating or significantly limiting your child's tech use if you notice behaviors like these. Most parents who set limits on their child's tech use – and consistently enforce those limits – report a significant positive improvement.

Guidelines for Parents (Non-TV technology)

- **Childhood is a great time to focus on social and emotional development.** Too much technology can interfere with this!
- **Limit your kids' tech use to 1-3 hours per day.** More than that makes it difficult to break the addictive cycle. American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 2 hours.
- **Avoid allowing screen-time in the morning.** Nothing that comes after compares to that adrenaline, which can result in a negative attitude following use.

(See other side for more tips!)