

Guidelines for Responsible Technology Use

Dear Family,

Now is the perfect time to talk to your child about responsible use of technology. Think of it like this: Your child's brain is under construction, so technical safeguards are important. When it comes to social networking, security, and privacy on mobile and desktop devices, there's no substitute for good modeling, respectful communication, and patience. Below are some suggestions for ways to talk to your child about responsible technology use.

Social Networking: Social networking sites are popular with both children and adults, and can be accessed from computers, mobile devices, and smartphones with an Internet connection. These sites allow users to share information and communicate with others, often publically, which means it's important to discuss appropriate use with your child.

- **Set privacy controls:** Control is critical on the internet, and privacy controls are a great way to maintain control over social networking. Know how they work and discuss what settings you will and will not allow for your child. Also, check in often to make sure the settings haven't been changed.
- **Learn social networking sites:** Your child is probably a social networking expert, so you need to be, too! Sign up, create a profile, and learn how to use it. If you're new to social networking, you could even ask your child to help you set it up. You'll gain insight into how she uses the site, and she might enjoy the opportunity to teach you something new about her world!
- **Friend your child:** Social networks are expansive and often include family members. Being friends is a great way to stay connected and keep your child safe. Plus, it allows you to model your expectations for appropriate online behavior.
- **Monitor postings:** It's not spying – social network postings are intended for everyone to see. Monitor what your child is putting out there about herself, your family, her friends, school, work, sports, activities, etc. Also, look at what she's being exposed to from others, and what's being said/tagged/posted/shared about her.
- **Talk to child about dangers:** The Internet never forgets. Reinforce that there are no secrets on the Internet, and nothing is deleted. Your child's post today has the potential to be seen by colleges, future employers, and anyone else – including your own friends and colleagues!

Mobility – Security & Privacy: Chances are your child has a mobile device and it's the primary way he accesses the Internet. Tell him how important it is to stay in control of his cyber profile. Go over privacy settings, and discuss how he can respect both his own and other people's privacy. Let him know that online friends are still strangers, and it's good to be suspicious!

- **Know the device's capabilities:** Mobile devices have many features that can often seem daunting. Make sure you know how your child's device works. Sometimes with settings that might seem beneficial (like Geotagging), the risks can outweigh the rewards.
- **Agree what content is allowed:** Set specific rules and be clear with your child about what content is never allowed on her device. Let her know there are real consequences associated with engaging in inappropriate or disrespectful behaviors. Be sure to establish open lines of communication from the getgo so he will come to you with anything that seems questionable or threatening.
- **Save abusive messages/images:** If you discover something inappropriate on your child's device, confiscate the device immediately. Don't copy the information, reply, or delete it. Instead report it to the police or the proper authorities for investigation.

- **Decide consequences:** Let your child know there will be consequences if he disregards your rules, or engages in inappropriate or dangerous behavior online.
- **Encourage balanced use:** Don't forget that the Internet can also bring people together! Encourage your child to balance her time online – it isn't just about socializing. Work with him to raise awareness about an issue that means something to him, or fundraise for a local charity. The possibilities are endless!

What You Can Do at Home: Staying safe online starts at home. There are a number of ways you can increase security for all users – including your child.

- **Home Network Security:** Securing your network is essential. Consider using web content filtering software to protect your home. Such software can be found available for download, often with a free license. Always secure your wireless connections, and monitor router activity.
- **Physical Ideas:** Try a new rule – “No technology out of the living area.” Create family charging stations, and position computer monitors in high traffic zones. If online time is also family time, there will be less opportunity for inappropriate use.
- **Work Station Controls:** Security is also important at the device level. For computers, create individual logons for each user. Always keep your virus and malware programs current. For logins, use complex alphanumeric passwords that contain punctuation. Also, power down technology when it is not actively in use.

Additional Resources: Below are several sites for additional information. Remember, Know your Cyber Profile, Make the Right Decisions, Stay On-Guard Online, and Share Your Knowledge!

- Twitter
 - **Get Cyber Safe** @GetCyberSafe
 - **Above the Fray** @BeAboveTheFray
 - **On Line Bullying** @onlinebullying
 - **Safe and Secure on Line** @ISC2Cares
 - **Embrace Civility OnLine** @GoCivility
- Online
 - **National Cyber Security Alliance:** www.staysafeonline.org
 - **Digital Citizenship-Using Technology Appropriately:** www.digitalcitizenship.org
 - **Embrace Civility:** www.embracecivility.org
 - **Common Sense Media:** <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/cell-phone-parenting>
 - **Growing wireless:** <http://www.growingwireless.com/>

