

PARENT'S GUIDE TO
TEENAGE
TECHNOLOGY



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NO MAGIC CHECK- BOX

TECHNOLOGY CAN'T SOLVE THE PROBLEM

If you have ever worked with computers, you have probably experienced spending hours trying to solve a problem only to find you forgot to check a box somewhere that instantly fixes everything. Although there are tools to help, there is no app, setting, or magical checkbox that will save the day!

The real solutions come from investing into the situation, letting them know you care about them, having tough conversations, creating accountability, building their character, and teaching them to responsibly and respectfully use technology.

THE HEART OF IT

BUILD CHARACTER

Technology isn't inherently evil, it's more about how we choose to use technology. As parents, it's our responsibility to build character in our children, so once they reach adulthood they are able to make responsible decisions on their own. With technology, we need to give them healthy guidelines and boundaries that create long-term values. Facebook won't last forever (thank goodness), but there are social responsibilities that transcend our culture. It becomes less about the technology and more about guiding our child to make good choices - giving them a filter to know the difference between right and wrong. How we use and teach our children to use technology is an extension of our values and character. We need to invest into our children to give them a bright and fulfilling future.

MODEL THE WAY

The truth is, children learn the most from watching how we act and respond to situations. The same is true when it comes to areas of technology. They see the time spent and how we are using our time with technology. It's important we follow the same rules and expectations we place on our children. If there is a rule of 'No technology at the dinner table', then the same rules apply for us as parents. The best way to build character in our children is to be the example and set the pace for our families.

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY

We all need to be held accountable at one time or another. As parents, it's important that we create a healthy accountability with our children as they grow and learn social responsibilities. Simple things like random and frequent checks of their phone let your child know that you are invested in their world. This will also hopefully make them think a little harder the next time they are tempted to do something inappropriate since they know their parent will check. Another option (my recommendation), is to use parental controls on the phone to disable their ability to install an app. This forces them to come to you to ask permission to install anything on their phone, which lets you track everything installed on the phone and forces a conversation. This idea lets you set expectations before they use an app rather than being reactive when it's often too late.

SEE IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

Sometimes changing our perspective can also change our approach. Technology can be really intimidating or even a little scary, but it's important as parents that we focus less on the technology and more on the teaching opportunity. We can use technology as a catalyst to have conversations with our teenagers about issues such as sex, dating, pornography, bullying, peer pressure, etc. An example might be when your child is ready to setup an Instagram or Facebook account, use it as an opportunity to set expectations and have tough conversations about big issues they will face. We can use technology to teach them practical ways to be responsible.

HEALTHY GUIDELINES

Understand the phone belongs to the parent, the child is using it as a privilege

The parent is the one who signs the contract. Since it's a privilege, they understand the phone can be taken away if boundaries are broken.

Set Clear Expectations

Be upfront and clear. If your child has a better understanding of the expectations of using the phone it becomes easier to enforce boundaries.

NO Secret Passwords or Accounts

Access to all their accounts adds another level of accountability.

You break it, you buy it

Take responsibility for any physical damage to the phone and responsibility for any plan overages including voice minutes, texting, and data.

Just because your friend has it, doesn't mean you will

All apps can be setup to be approved by mom and dad. They can wait for your permission to install an app which gives you control over which apps are installed on the phone. They don't always need the latest, greatest, or newest phone.

EVERYTHING is Public

Colleges and Employers now look at Social Media as a reference. Anyone can pass along whatever is posted with a screenshot, saving a file, reposting, quoting, etc. Once it's online, it can be online forever.

Device will be checked for any inappropriate content

Porn, explicit music, cursing, photos of anything inappropriate, etc. Random and frequent phone checks create healthy accountability.

Your presence online is representing yourself, your families, your friends, and your school

Anything done on the phone could be done in the presence of the parent. It's important for them to realize what they say and do online reflects more than just them.

Time with the phone

Define acceptable times of use. Define non-acceptable times - school, bedtime, at the dinner table, etc. Define the amount of time spent playing games. Be sure to adjust times with age and maturity as they build your trust.

Proper Etiquette

Know when to silence or turn off the phone - movies, restaurants, etc. Shouldn't use the phone when interacting with someone in person. Be respectful to others and not rude. Choose appropriate times to listen to music and text. This is a direct reflection of how we use our phones as parents. Set a good example.

When Mom and Dad call, always answer, no matter what

The parent should be able to reach the child at any time.

Never use technology in a way that is hurtful to others

Never say anything over text or a social network you wouldn't say to someone in person. Never create a fake account to make fun of someone else. Never post photos, videos, or text that could be embarrassing to someone else.

Use technology in a way that encourages others

Technology allows us to connect with others easier and more often. It's important we teach our children to use technology to have a positive influence on others.

GOOD IDEA!

Create a simple contract with your child using these guidelines to establish clear and up front expectations.



GET HELP

TOP 3 WAYS TO GET HELP

01

Honest conversations with other parents

Our children learn organically through relationships. They learn from their friends saying "Hey, have you seen this app. It's amazing!". As parents, we need to learn the same way. There is no way for us to possibly keep track of every new app or innovation. It's important we share information with other parents.

02

Don't be afraid to Ask

A free lunch can go a long way with a college student that knows way more about this stuff than us! Since there isn't a map for this, you need to stop and ask for directions.

03

Google It

Books get outdated too quickly. Google will find the latest articles and information on any topic.

CAUTION

TYPE OF APPS TO WATCH

Apps with In-App Browsers

Examples: Twitter, Facebook

In-App browsers are the ability to browse the internet from inside an app. It's like having Internet Explorer, Chrome or Safari built inside an app like Twitter or Facebook. For example, someone could tweet themselves a link to google, then after clicking on the link have access to search google from within the Twitter app. There is no history or tracking on in-app browsing.

Hidden File Apps

These apps come in the form of fake calculators, games, flashlights, etc. They can be used to access hidden files, photos, videos, and even internet browsers. You can find these apps in the app store by searching for 'hidden files' or 'hidden browsers'.

Games with Social Components

Some games can be used more for their chat and social components rather than gameplay.

Texting or Chat Apps

Examples: Kik, Facebook Message, MiTalk Messenger

Allows users to text and chat using Wifi or data connection. If you only check the main messaging app on the phone, you may not see everyone your child is texting.

VOIP Apps (Voice Over IP)

Examples: Google Voice, Google Talk, Skype

Allows users to setup (for free) separate phone numbers, texting, and voicemail. Uses data and Wifi instead of traditional voice plans. With these apps you can use an iPod or iPhone as an actual phone over Wifi.

GOOD IDEA!

Check the "Top Charts" on the app store. This lets you know what currently are the most downloaded apps.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IOS AND ANDROID?

On the surface, Android and iOS are basically the same, right? Well, sort of. Both smartphone operating systems allow you install Apps, send text messages, surf the web, make phone calls, listen to music, watch videos, and even do the laundry (not really, but that would be nice!). The point is, they both do a ton, but there is a BIG fundamental difference between Android and iOS that affects your ability as a parent to control the device.

THE SANDBOX ANALOGY

Let's pretend that Android and iOS each have a backyard that makes up the entire functionality of the phone, and the developers (people who make the apps) stop by to play in the backyard. When the developers are making their apps, they aren't only allowed to play in the entire backyard, only a sandbox. The big difference between Android and iOS is how Apple (iOS) and Google (Android) limit the developer's control, or sandbox, the phone.

iOS 

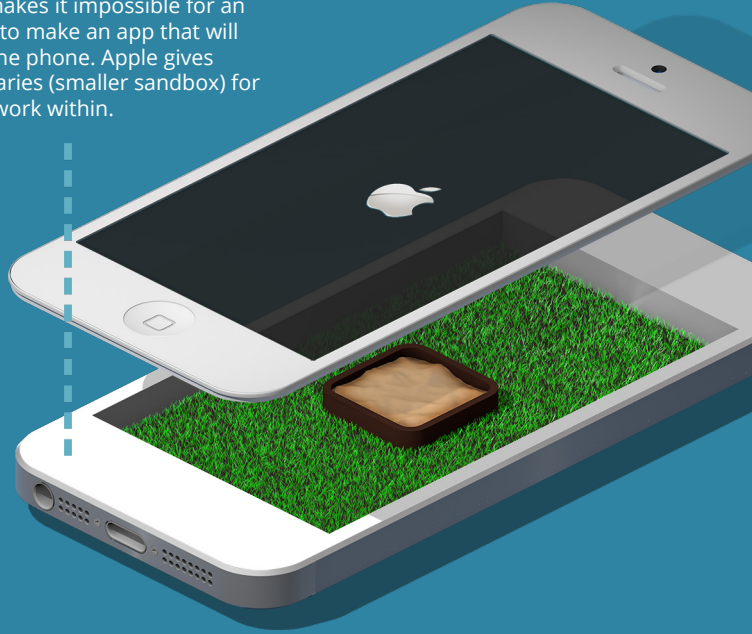
Apple as a company, generally speaking, is a bunch of control freaks! They have a small sandbox. However, most of the time this works in your advantage because Apple does a great job controlling the user experience which is why they make great products. Because of this, all the apps run on top of the operating system. What does this mean for you? Well, Apple doesn't allow other apps to control things such as text messaging, app control, time restrictions, etc. The only true parental controls offered on an Apple iOS are the controls built into iOS which are found in the settings app. This severely limits other developers to make parental control apps since Apple doesn't allow access needed to monitor the device. If an app in the App Store claims to offer parental control, they aren't giving you the full truth since their sandbox doesn't allow them to have access to truly monitor the device. Basically, there is no such thing as a parental control app in the App Store.

 ANDROID 

Google as a company, generally speaking, is more open. They have a much bigger sandbox (more like a beach). This means the app developers have more control over the entire device so it becomes possible to have apps that completely control and monitor every aspect of the device. This includes the ability to monitor text, apps, websites, and all the things you would expect with parental controls. However, it is important to note, Google currently offers NO built in parental controls or restrictions. If you are using an Android device, you MUST install a parental control app in order to have any control over the device. The downside to Google's open philosophy - apps can be more complicated due to a lack of quality control and the number of different Android devices.

iOS

Developers (people who make the apps) have less control over the operating system. This makes it impossible for an app developer to make an app that will truly monitor the phone. Apple gives specific boundaries (smaller sandbox) for developers to work within.



ANDROID

Google gives developers more freedom (larger sandbox) and control over the phone which makes it easier to develop an app to monitor the phone. Android has built in restrictions and depends more on app developers to make parental control apps.

