

Parenting In Context



Parenting in the Digital Age: Strategies & Recommendations for Promoting Healthy Technology and Media Use with Your Kids

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How much media do kids consume?

Any guesses?

- How much TV do young children ages 0-2 watch per day?
 - Average of 55 minutes/day**
 - 38% have used a mobile device for any media activity by age 2**
- How much TV do young children ages 2-4 watch per day?
 - Average of 90 minutes/day**
 - 80% have used a mobile device for any media activity by age 4**
- How much media (*computer, phone, TV, videogames, and movies*) do teens and pre-teens consume per day?
 - Average of 5+ hours/day**
 - (7-8 hours when including media multi-tasking)**
 - 78% of teens have their own cell phone**



Is Technology and Media Good or Bad for Kids?

- Hot topic, new research emerging every year
- Overall there are risks and benefits of media use for kids.
- Be wary of news or magazine articles with extreme views, instead seek to understand the **mechanisms** behind their claims.

“10 Reasons why handheld devices should be banned for children under the age of 12”
--Huffington Post

“Hey Parents, what that iPad is doing to your kid is shocking”--Modern Parent

“Social websites harm children's brains: Chilling warning to parents from top neuroscientist” --Daily Mail

Risks & Benefits of Technology/Media Use

Possible Risks:

1. Overuse can limit time spent on other important activities
2. Child aggression
3. Possible attention deficits
4. Cyberbullying
5. Connecting with unsafe communities/individuals online

Possible Benefits:

1. Socialization and communication
2. Enhanced learning and educational benefits
3. Encourages awareness, creativity, and individuality
4. Develops technical skills
5. Media may decrease stress and anxiety

Possible Risks of Technology & Media Use

- 1. Media overuse can limit time kids spend on other important activities such as schoolwork, sleep, and exercise**
 - **Poor grades:** One study reports that nearly half (47%) of all heavy media users say they usually get fair or poor grades, compared to 23% of light media users.
 - **Sleep deprivation:** A recent study found that 76% of 11- to 18-year-olds have their own TV or computer in their bedroom. Another study found that having any type of media overnight was linked to sleep deprivation
 - **Poor physical health:** Studies have found high media use linked to less physical activity and poor health

For Parents:

- Monitor your child's time and set media rules. Children need media limits. Children with no media rules consume nearly 3 more hours of media each day.
 - Observe the context of media activities and make adjustments. For example, eating unhealthy snacks during TV time or allowing cellphone in your child's bedroom overnight.

Sources: Roberts & Foehr, 2008; Tremblay, 2005; Ratey, 2008

Possible Risks of Technology & Media Use

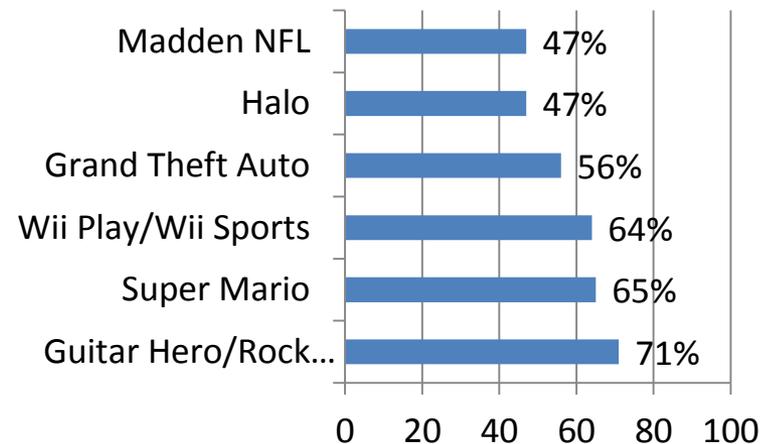
2. Violent media linked to aggression

- Overall consensus that violent media is linked to increased aggression in young children
- Some mixed results when considering how violent media affects teens. Most research in this area is correlational.
- Some research studies short-term effects (e.g., heart rate, blood pressure, angry feelings)
- Increased short-term effects linked to violent video game use, particularly where participant is harming people in the game and continual exposure

For Parents:

- Become educated on media content. Don't rely on ratings system only, many helpful sites online to learn more about content.
 - Set content rules. By mid-teens, only 12% of parents report having rules about the content of video games. Yet many popular video games have a "M" or "Mature" rating intended for ages 17+.

Types of Video Games Played by 8-18 year olds



Source: Bushman & Huesmann, 2006; Roberts & Foehr, 2008;

Possible Risks of Technology & Media Use

3. Possible attention deficits for young kids

- Mixed findings:
 - Studies of 1-3 year olds found that children exposed to TV more than 5 hours a day had an increased chance of their parents reporting attention problems at age 7.
 - But most studies don't collect baseline data—We don't know if TV causes attention problems or if parents of kids with attention problems are more likely to have their kids watch TV.
- Although we can't say that media causes attention problems in young children, attention problems are linked with **very high media usage** (5+ hours/day) and **watching programs designed for older ages** (for example: SpongeBob vs. Caillou)



For Parents:

- Again, avoid high media usage. Don't rely on media to be a babysitter, if possible!
- Pick developmentally appropriate programs. If you do use media, pick programs that are designed for your child's age and are slower-paced.

Source: Lerner & Barr, 2014

Possible Risks of Technology & Media Use

4. Cyberbullying—Being the target of nasty messages, cruel postings, impersonation, and other forms of online social aggression or engaging in such online aggression

- Study surveyed nearly 100 students in the USA ages 13-18 years, **49% reported that they had been a victim of cyberbullying.**
- What are common ways cyberbullying occurs? What have you seen?
- **Parents are often unaware of cyberbullying.** Across all types of cyberbullying 43% of teens who had been cyberbullied said they didn't tell anyone. Parents also reported unawareness of the numerous possible types of cyberbullying.

For Parents:

- [Talk to your child about cyberbullying.](#) Discuss signs and come up with a plan if cyberbullying occurs.
- [Encourage settings & discourage risky media:](#) Private vs. public accounts, and avoid risky media (SnapChat)
- [Monitor your child's media platforms.](#) Become "friends" with your child on Facebook, Instagram, etc. Depending on age, monitor other media activity.

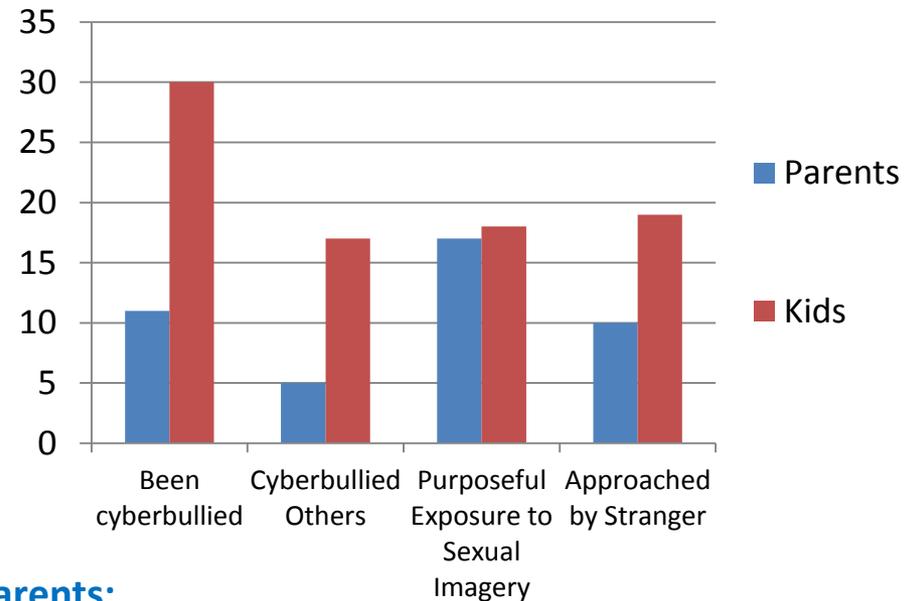
Sources: Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell & Tippett, 2008

Possible Risks of Technology & Media Use

5. Connecting with unsafe individuals or communities online

- Sexually related
 - Predators for “hook-ups” with adults or other teens, engaging in or receiving sexual harassment, sexting
- Violence related
 - Hate groups, gangs, violent online groups
- Safety related
 - Online groups that promote self-harm, anorexia, drug use, and suicide
 - Privacy concerns (Tagged photos with current location, or “checking in” on Facebook status, etc.)

Are parents' concerns of risks accurate?



For Parents:

- [Talk to your child about online predators, privacy concerns, and safety concerns](#)
- [Again, encourage settings & discourage risky media](#)
- [Again, Monitor your child's media platforms](#)

Sources: Byrne, Katz, Lee, Linz, & McIlrath, 2014

Benefits of Technology/Media Use

1. Socialization and communication

- Allows kids to stay connected with friends and family, increases resources for child and parent by tapping into extended family connections
- Can encourage child or teenager to connect with a positive community or individuals and build important relationships online and exchange ideas
- Child/teen can learn about local events and resources



For Parents:

- Set up online activities with extended family. Reading dates, baking together, giving a report for school, can be a resource for both the parent and child
- Bookmark interesting and safe online sites: Local community calendar, groups your child may have interest in, etc.

Benefits of Technology/Media Use

2. Enhanced learning and educational benefits

– Enhancing learning at school:

- Blogs and websites used by teachers to enrich classes
- Students use Facebook to work on group projects
- New interactive programs that teach difficult concepts, test students' knowledge, and then re-teach concepts that were misunderstood

– Enhancing learning at home:

- Young children—language and writing apps for young children
- Preteens and teens—math, science, language games
- Interactive video clips and websites that teach various concepts for both kids and parents (useful for parents if they are unsure of how to help)

For Parents:

- Ask teachers what media/technology is used at school. Stay up to date on blogs and websites being used, could even incorporate same programs at home, if possible.
 - Balance regular videogames/computer games with educational games: Many educational games are available online for free.

Benefits of Technology/Media Use

3. Encourages awareness, creativity, and individuality

- Awareness: extend their view of self to the community and the world. Media can be an important way that kids can learn about historical and current world issues which can increase respect and tolerance.
- Creativity: similar to using the web to enhance educational learning, can also encourage creativity and talents (learning how to play guitar, photography, knit, basketball techniques, etc.)
- Individuality: Media fosters one's individual identity by what he/she publishes, posts, or "likes" (e.g., Facebook profile picture, Instagram pictures, blog posts, comments)



For Parents:

- Encourage exploration and creativity online instead of usual TV/videogames: there are many great resources online (TED talks, blogs, video clips, etc.) encourage interactive, educational and talent building internet use—even just for a part of their media time

Benefits of Technology/Media Use

4. Develops technical skills

- World is becoming increasingly technical and software driven. Media helps develop numerous skills that are useful in future careers and learning such as: *Coding, programming, increasing hand-eye coordination, entrepreneurship, strategic thinking, interpretative analysis, and problem solving*



For Parents:

- Encourage skill-based media use: for example, free programs available to teach kids how to code a simple iPad game then expand coding skills to more complex games

Benefits of Technology/Media Use

5. Media may temporarily decrease stress and anxiety

- Break from stressful life events to rest and refocus
- Technology/media can be a tool for coordinating homework, relationships, etc. which may minimize stress
- Media can be used as a positive coping strategy when stressed (e.g., messaging friends about your worries and fears, looking up useful information online)

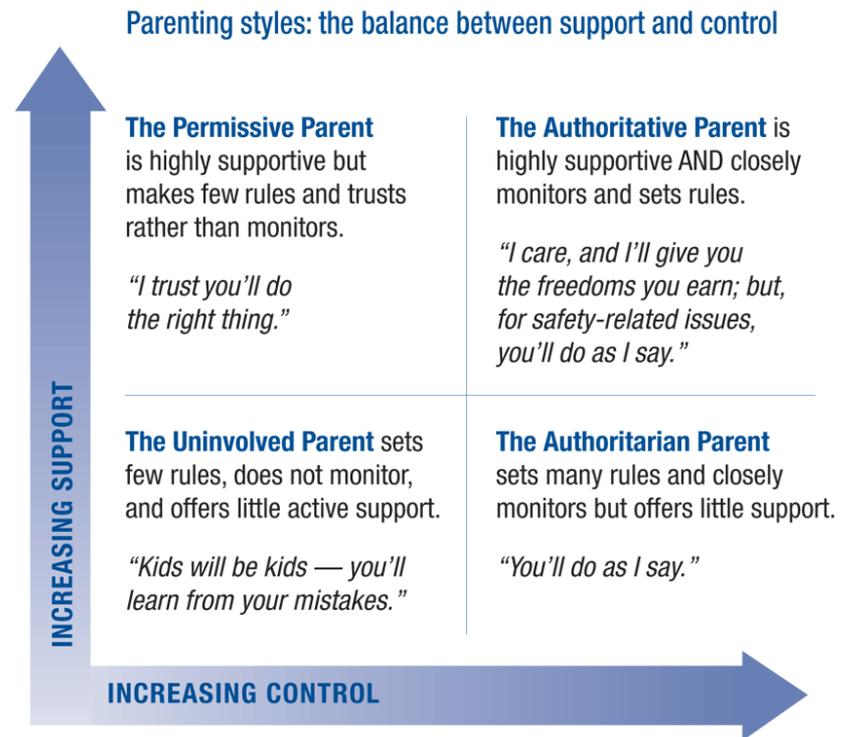


For Parents:

- Encourage thoughtful media use: teens tend to use more social media when depressed or stressed. Media may be helpful to temporarily decrease stress, but this should not be overused or a strategy teens rely on consistently.

Common Discipline Concepts & Theories

- Useful foundation before we discuss media and monitoring rules
 - Parenting Styles
 - Rewards and Punishments
 - Goal is to choose strategies that promote effective discipline not harsh punishment



Setting Rules for Technology/Media Use

Logistics of setting media and technology guidelines to consider:

- **Appropriate amount of time spend on media**—could be by media type, technology type, or total time
- **Appropriate times to be engaged in media**—could designate certain times to be media-free times, such as during meals, homework, etc.
- **Appropriate locations for media use**—public areas at home vs. private areas
- **Appropriate content**—movie ratings, video game ratings, developmentally appropriate TV shows for young children
- **Settings on social media and phone apps**—many social media apps can be changed to private or semi-private
- **Appropriate media rules when you are not present**—deciding on rules when you are not present and also communicating your rules to another caregiver or teenager who is supervising
- **Consider age and individual needs**—guidelines should change as your child ages and you may adapt certain guideline based on specific needs
- **Consider a contract between you and your child outlining expectations and use for technology**



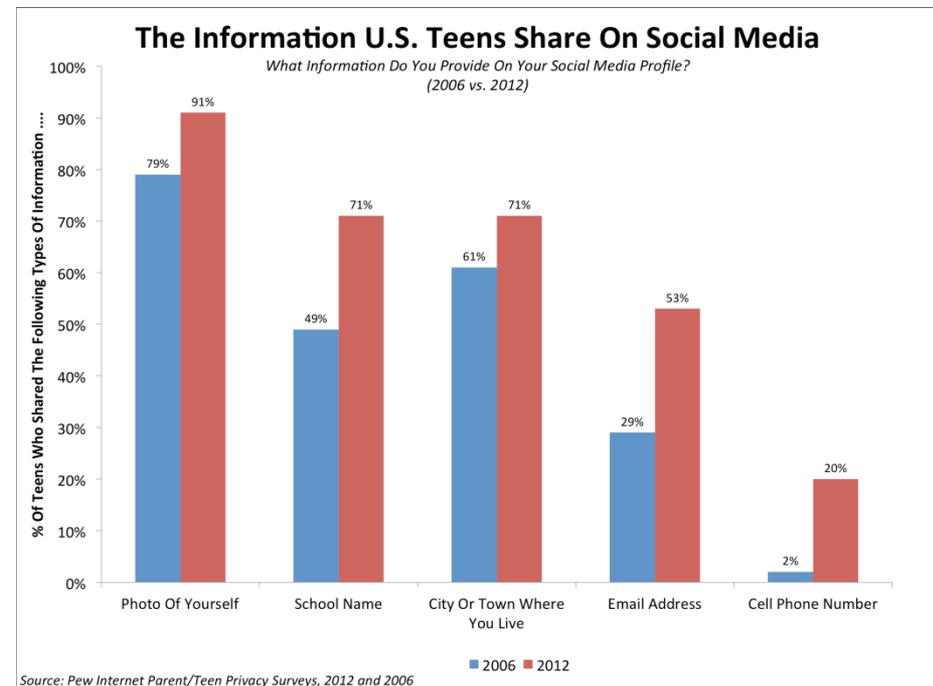
Monitoring Technology/Media Use & Following Through

Use Available Tools if Appropriate

- **Computer security.** Firewalls, spam blocker, browser configured to avoid pop-up ads, search engine preferences set to filter search results
- **Time Limiting Software.** Time limiting software can limit access when you are not present or can also be used to enforce time limits. Available for TV, computer, cellphone.
- **Filtering Software.** Filters certain websites to control unwanted content (free internet filters available online)
- **Monitoring Software.** Ability to view child's text messages or internet use directly. Use if appropriate. The amount that you monitor should depend on age of child as well as perceived risks.

Following through if technology use rules are not followed

- Open communication
- Screen time is a privilege (or reward) which can be taken away if abused



Promoting Healthy Technology/Media Use

- **Model healthy use yourself**
 - As a parent, children will be watching you as a model if there are technology patterns you want to discourage in your kids be sure you are avoiding them as well
 - Limit your use to nap times, night time, or quiet times when possible
- **Engage children while using technology**
 - Use interactive videogames and apps, talk with your child during commercials of a movie, etc.
- **Become educated in electronic devices, new apps, and social media trends so you can be aware**
 - Don't rely on ratings, research the latest apps and social media trends. Ask your child to teach you and look online for more information.



Summary

- **Young Children:**

- SAFETY: Use the internet in common areas. Only use safe, bookmarked websites. All electronic communications should be limited to family and well-known friends.
- TIME: Avoid using media and technology as a babysitter. Time spent engaged with media should be minimal.
- CONTENT: Avoid violent media, use developmentally appropriate media (avoid fast-paced media), choose interactive media and interact with your child during media use.

- **Older Children:**

- SAFETY: Involve older children in discussions of safe websites and allow more freedom by choosing appropriate websites together. Discuss safety issues and the reasons behind guidelines. Use the internet in common areas. Only use bookmarked websites that you both agree on.
- TIME: May increase time, but remember that media time is earned and a privilege. Privileges can go away! Adjust time if other areas are suffering (reading, exercise, etc.).
- CONTENT: Avoid violent media, use developmentally appropriate media. Engage in media with your older child by processing more complex concepts “Why do you think the father was sad?” etc.

Summary

- **Early Teens:**

- SAFETY: Increased discussion of risks and safety issues of online use. Communications should be restricted to known friends or at least same age group (discourage social networking sites with older teens and unknown adults). Monitor your child's online activities and discuss appropriate settings. Join any networks/sites that your child is involved in and communicate with your child electronically.
- TIME: Again, time may increase or types of technology may increase (for example adding a Facebook profile with a private setting). Adjust time if other areas suffering (reading, exercise, etc.).
- CONTENT: Research ratings (IMDB parents guide for movies and video games), stay up to date on phone apps and what apps your teen is using. Have periodic discussions about cyberbullying and media use risks.

- **Older Teens:**

- Continually add additional freedom for your older teen.
- By this age, your teen should know how to independently use the Internet safely and responsibly. This provides time for “fine-tuning” before your child turns 18. Continue to discuss issues and, if concerned, check the history file. Some individual adjustment may be needed.

Any questions?

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[http://www.human.cornell.edu/pam/outreach/
parenting/index.cfm](http://www.human.cornell.edu/pam/outreach/parenting/index.cfm)

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