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TECHNOLOGY AND KIDS:
AN ONLINE SAFETY GUIDE

Kids growing up in the digital era – a.k.a. Generation Tech – are being exposed to technology and consumer electronics at earlier ages than ever before: Households with kids aged 4 to 14 possess 11 high-tech devices on average alone. Happily, technology can be a powerful and positive part of children's lives if adults are also willing to educate themselves about it and get involved. The following guide offers hints, tips and expert advice for teaching technology to kids of all ages. Remember: Healthy and ongoing dialogue is key to teaching positive high-tech habits and keeping kids safe online – you can make a difference.

Online Safety: 10 Hints and Tips

Teach both yourself and your students or kids to observe these simple rules to make technology a healthy part of classroom and household life:

» Homework is for parents too: Always study, research and go-hands on with new technologies to make more informed decisions and stay abreast of changing features and trends.

» If time's tight, get a crash course on new products, services, and features by visiting popular product review sites or searching for tutorials online, e.g. "How to Turn Off iPhone Purchases."

» Besides employing kid-friendly software, apps and Web filters, educate children on online dangers and encourage them to speak up when concerns arise.

» Use the parental controls built into popular high-tech devices and programs to limit content by age-appropriateness, and password-protect your settings.

» Activate privacy features built into social networks to limit strangers'

access to personal information. Don't assume they're adequately set by default.

» Confine screens to common household areas such as playrooms and dens, so usage and play habits can be monitored.

» Establish predetermined times when usage of high-tech devices is permitted or banned, and shut them off at least one hour before bedtime.

» Create and be consistent about enforcing house rules with regard to technology.

» Leverage many popular programs' and devices' built-in options to limit Internet connectivity, purchases, and whom kids can interact with.

» Talk about responsible spending habits with children, and consider using prepaid cards when buying online.

5 Ways to Protect Your Privacy Online

Help kids connect safely and responsibly on the Internet by remembering these five tips:

» Never share personal information online, including addresses, birthdays, phone numbers, etc.

» Always avoid mentioning when you'll be away from home... especially when on vacation.

» Be cautious about people and things you encounter online - not all will be upright or true.

» Think twice before posting potentially controversial content, as it may come back to haunt you.

» Be wary when meeting online acquaintances in real-life: Stick to public places, tell others where you're going, check in with friends or family frequently, and - better yet - bring a chaperone.

How to Teach Digital Citizenship

Prepare kids for high-tech life by educating them about appropriate and positive ways to use technology with the following lessons:

- » Respect the Golden Rule – Treat others online the same way you'd like to be treated. If you don't have something nice to say, don't say it.

- » Think Twice Before Posting – Anything shared on the Internet can live forever online. Before posting, take a second to stop and reconsider whether it's wise to do so.

- » Be Positive – Negativity's never a good look: The image we project online influences how others perceive us – remember, it's all too easy to misinterpret comments or take them out of context.

- » Act Appropriately – All the information you share is permanent, public and powerful: Words and actions shared online can have a deep and lasting impact - use them to do good.

- » Respect Creativity – Give credit where due when borrowing or referencing others' thoughts or creations.

Questions to Ask About Technology

When speaking with kids about technology, it's not only important to discuss devices and when it's appropriate to use them. It's also crucial to converse about healthy computing habits, making good decisions, and being responsible online citizens. Here are some questions to get the discussion started:

- » What devices are you using to access the Internet?

- » How and in which ways are you using this online access?

- » What types of activities, sites, and individuals do you like to engage with online?

- » What are our rules for appropriate high-tech usage?

- » What will we do if these rules are broken?

- » Is screen time an inherent right or earned privilege? How much will be allowed daily?

- » What times are designated to be free of high-tech devices?

- » Do you know what it means to be a responsible digital citizen?

- » What should you do if you encounter questionable or inappropriate content or behavior online?

- » Do we all feel comfortable turning to each other for help if we have any questions?

Kids and Screen Time: How Much is Enough?

Experts remain torn regarding screen time limits, as household opinions differ and children mature and develop at different speeds. Luckily, the following insights can help you better answer the question for yourself:

- » The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under the age of two.

- » Roughly 30-60 minutes of screen time makes a reasonable starting point, which may be extended to 60-120 minutes as kids grow older.

- » You may wish to distinguish between different types of screen time when considering limits – e.g. doing homework on the PC vs. playing games.

- » Some households make screen time a privilege – children must earn it before it can be enjoyed.

- » All screen time should be balanced by equal or greater amounts of time spent enjoying real-world and outdoor activities.
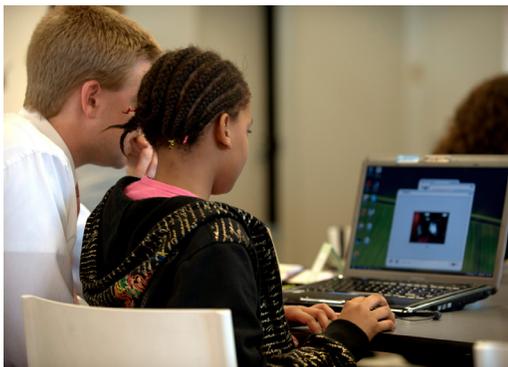
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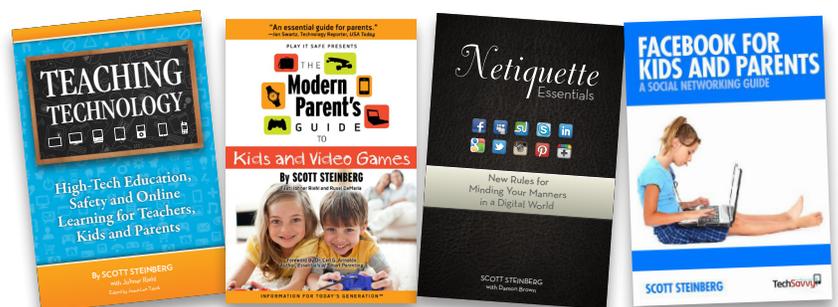
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