

Parenting in the Digital Age
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Parenting has changed in the last ten years as kids increasingly live out their lives online. Parenting in the digital age does require some new awareness, but it also relies on good old-fashioned communication skills and role modeling.

Begin by modeling positive behavior: Take breaks from technology, establish no cell phone or other device time, collect phones or use docking stations at night, and treat others with civility both online and offline.

Talk to your kids about what sites are okay and what sites are off-limits: Don't just tell kids not to go to inappropriate websites, have conversations about why these sites are against your personal values, morals, or ethics.

Talk to your kids in a developmentally appropriate manner about the "grooming" techniques that are used by online predators. Kids should know that individuals might hide their true identity online. They should avoid responding to individuals who request personal information or photos. Teens should understand how nude photo sharing could lead to exploitation and extortion.

Discuss behaviors you want them to embrace and what behaviors you want them to avoid:

Online learning, research, creating, communicating and sharing ideas and projects are positive behaviors. Yet there are negative behaviors to avoid such as online gossip, cyber bullying, visiting inappropriate websites, inappropriate photo or video sharing, plagiarizing and cheating. Remind your kids that anything shared digitally can potentially be public and permanent.

Educate yourself about appropriate ways to monitor your child's digital world. Use monitoring to encourage conversations and "course corrections" when necessary. Be careful not to over-react, but use this information to ask questions and have teachable moments.

The following are tools and practices that can assist you:

- **Set up agreements on what sites and behaviors are okay, but let your children know you will be monitoring to ensure their safety.** This can be low tech or high tech. Follow their social media accounts and have their passwords for spot-checking. Let them know, as they get older and demonstrate responsible use you will be able to monitor less.
- **Consider parental control monitoring apps (especially for new users) and take advantage of free tools such as google family link for android phone users.** You may also like Open DNS or Circle with Disney, which can be added to your network to manage content and time on all of your devices, including gaming devices, Netflix, tablets etc. for a fee. Many other similar parental

control devices allow you to control access from your device. PC magazine online regularly reviews parental control apps.

- **Keep in mind that communication is more useful than solutions based on technology.** As children get older and demonstrate responsible use, parents should rely more on conversation and less on monitoring, particularly as your child moves into the teen years.

The following websites offer great tips for parents and teens:

www.Commonsensemedia.org

Provides reviews of and tips for using all forms of media including social media, games, educational apps, movies, books, and more.

www.Commonsensemedia.org/latino

(Spanish version of the website)

www.Connectsafely.org

Connect Safely has a number of free parent guides for downloading such as:

Parents guide to Instagram: <https://www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/qg-instagram.pdf>

Parents guide to Snapchat: <https://www.connectsafely.org/a-parents-guide-to-snapchat/>

Parents guide to Google Family Link: <https://www.connectsafely.org/familylink/>

Parent's guide to cyberbullying: <https://www.connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/qg-cyberbullying.pdf>