Sir Robert Pattinson Academy

Sapientia et Doctrina

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Dear Parent/Carer

Year 9 Options, Year 11 May Half Term Revision School, PD Day 5, Digital Safety Resources for Parents, Free School Meal Vouchers, UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, Yet More Work to the Building, Year 6 into Year 7 Transition

Welcome to my end of week update letter.

The full cohort GCSE examinations are fully underway now and I have been really impressed by how seriously Year 11 have taken it. They have behaved really well and, as a result, have put themselves in the best possible position to be successful. The secret now is consistency and doing the right things to keep the momentum going. We are rooting for you all to get the grades you want and deserve.

Year 9 Options

Year 9 options confirmation letters have now been sent out. Should there be any questions or queries, please contact Mr Ward and his team via options@srpa.co.uk.

Year 11 May Half Term Revision School

May half term revision activities will be available to Year 11 students by invitation only. Invitation letters will be given to affected students by close on Monday.

PD Day 5

Tuesday 20 May marks our fifth Personal Development Day. Our values focus for this term is engagement, which students in Years 7 to 10 will be exploring through an interactive quiz on current events and our Academy values. We will also be celebrating numeracy day in Years 7 to 9, with a range of exciting activities for our students to take part in.

In Year 7, students will also be exploring first aid techniques, with a focus on CPR training, putting their budgeting skills to the test by planning a trip to a theme park, as well as exploring how creativity in the workplace can boost engagement and job satisfaction.

In Year 8, students will explore the Duke of Edinburgh Award, taking part in some team-building exercises and campcraft activities to get a small taste of what DofE can offer them. Students will also learn about women's suffrage and how individuals can have huge impacts on political movements.

In Year 9, students will also be exploring the Duke of Edinburgh Award, as well as participating in the Festival Challenge – an enterprise activity where students must plan, budget and present a plan for a local festival of their design.

In Year 10, students will be exploring the world of renting and mortgages to garner their understanding of living in the wider world. Students will also learn about the importance of taxation and how far a typical month's earnings really stretches. In the afternoon, students will be exploring a carousel of different religious festivals to bolster their appreciation and tolerance for different cultures across the globe.

In Year 11, students will be undertaking revision in English, mathematics, science, sociology and languages, in preparation for their upcoming examinations.

In Year 12, students will participate in a confident communication workshop to improve their presentation skills and bolster their confidence in interviews. Students will also be participating in the 'Fakeaway Challenge', a workshop designed to improve their home-cooking skills, whilst saving money on expensive takeaways.

Year 13 students are to study independently at home, in preparation for their upcoming summer examinations.

Digital Safety Resources for Parents

Please find attached a guide to digital safety resources for parents and carers.

Free School Meal Vouchers

The Free School Meal vouchers which are due to be distributed on Friday 23 May 2025 are funded through the Household Support Fund. We have been asked by Lincolnshire County Council to point out that the vouchers are intended to cover essentials.

UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award

Through the work on our Respect value, we have achieved the RRSA Bronze award, making SRPA a Rights Committed School. As we work towards the Silver award, you can expect to see more links to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. To support your conversations at home, please see attached a list of rights and their explanations.

Miss Taylor deserves thanks and huge credit for her work on this award with our student body. We will now look forward to completing the silver award training and aiming for the next stage of the award.

Yet More Work to the Building

Over the past twelve months, I have been pestering the DfE for money to complete urgent building works and, it is fair to say, I have never relented.

On top of the ongoing £1.4m project to rewire parts of the building and replace all of the heaters, we have secured a further £450k to replace the final sets of fire doors in need of change as well as a further £1.2m to fully replace the hot and cold water systems.

Consequently, it is going to be a busy summer period. Much of the work will be done after school and/or overnight, but there will be disruption over the summer holidays and more so than usual. Certainly, by October half term, we should be somewhere close to finished. I am really pleased that we have secured this funding because it is urgent given the age of the building.

Year 6 into Year 7 Transition

Mr Kirk has also begun our transition visits to primary schools and, after the half term break, my weekly letters will begin to go to them too. Additional transition dates are also being offered to some schools whose children can't make it to our published transition days as well as to other groups of youngsters. We are well underway with our planning for September now and I look forwards to sharing those details with you soon.

With one week left of a short half term, we have one final push to get to the break. If facing examinations and just wanting them to end, remember that this is your time to shine. You've got this. But if you are not sure that you do, remember these inimitable words of Sir Winston Churchill: "Kites rise highest against the wind – not with it."

Have a good weekend when it comes.

I will write again soon.

Yours faithfully

Mr D Hardy
Headmaster

SIR ROBERT PATTINSON ACADEMY

Digital Safety Resources for Parents

Guiding Teens to Use Social Media

Parents today are more concerned than ever about their teenagers' social media habits, striving to balance the advantages of digital connection with the challenges it presents, such as cyberbullying and privacy concerns. To help your teen navigate social media safely and responsibly, here are some essential tips.

Understanding your teen's social media experience

Do you ever wonder what your teen encounters when they scroll through their social media feeds? The online world is dynamic and ever-changing, making it important for both parents and teenagers to be well-prepared for the opportunities and challenges that come with social media use.

By actively engaging in your child's digital life, you can encourage a healthy balance in their social media habits while ensuring their online safety in an evolving digital landscape.

Guidance for Parents

The pros and cons of social media

Social media serves as both a tool for creativity, learning, and socialisation and a potential source of harm. Teens may face issues such as excessive screen time, cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and online predators. Parents and teachers must stay informed about these risks.

Are they ready?

Before allowing your teen to create social media accounts, assess whether they are prepared to engage responsibly. This involves understanding digital citizenship-critical thinking, ethical online behaviour, and recognising potential dangers.

Encourage open conversations

Honest and judgment-free discussions are crucial. Understanding your teen's motivations for using social media helps set the stage for responsible use. It's also important to discuss the consequences of misuse and set clear expectations.

Be proactive

Parents can better guide their teens by familiarising themselves with popular apps, understanding their features and risks, setting usage boundaries, and using tools like Qustodio to monitor screen time and activity.

Keeping your teens safe online

Social media offers valuable opportunities for connection, learning and entertainment, but it also comes with risks. Features like disappearing messages can encourage risky behaviour, while location-sharing options may expose users to potential dangers. So, what can parents do to ensure their teen stays safe online?

Preparation is key. Before allowing social media use, ensure your teen understands how to navigate the digital world safely. Do they know how to recognise fake accounts? Can they block and report harmful content? Are you familiar with these features yourself?

Take the initiative to download and explore the apps your teen wants to use. Familiarise yourself with the privacy settings and reporting tools so you're equipped to offer guidance when needed.

Maintaining open communication is essential. Learning why your teen wants to use social media can provide insights into their online behaviour and help address potential risks. By fostering trust, you position yourself as a supportive resource they can turn to if they encounter problems online.

Remember, you're not in this alone! There are a range of resources available to help parents and educators support teens in managing their digital lives.

FAQs

What is the right age for my child to start using social media?

There's no universal answer, as readiness depends on your child's maturity level and ability to handle online responsibilities. Many platforms have age restrictions, so be sure to check their guidelines.

Are there tools to help manage my child's social media use?

Yes! Apps like Qustodio allow parents to track screen time, block inappropriate content, and monitor online activity, providing an added layer of security.

How can I supervise my child's social media use without violating their privacy?

Using parental control tools like Qustodio can help, but it's also important to have open discussions with your child about online safety. Instead of constant surveillance, schedule regular check-ins to talk about their online experiences, address any concerns, and guide them in making responsible choices. Staying informed about the latest social media trends and security settings will also help you support your teen effectively.

Is Screen Time Robbing Your Child of Sleep and Success?

Screens are everywhere these days - from classrooms to bedrooms - and while they can offer educational benefits and entertainment, too much screen exposure may be interfering with one of the most essential needs for growing minds: sleep.

The hidden cost of screen time

We often hear about the physical health concerns tied to too much screen time, but its impact on sleep is just as critical. Poor sleep caused by excessive device use doesn't just result in groggy mornings; it can lead to difficulty concentrating, emotional ups and downs, and behaviour that mirrors conditions like ADHD.

Signs your child might be sleep-deprived

Does any of this sound familiar?

- **Lack of focus at school?** A tired brain struggles to stay attentive. Your child may seem spaced out, need frequent redirection, or find it hard to follow along in class.

- **Struggling with memory or motivation?** Poor sleep impairs working memory and executive function, making it hard to follow instructions or stay engaged.

- **Restless or constantly moving?** Kids who aren't getting enough rest may fidget, pace, or bounce in their seat—not out of hyperactivity, but from sheer exhaustion.

- **Forgetful and scattered?** Sleep is essential for memory storage. Without it, your child might lose track of homework or forget simple tasks.

- **Emotional rollercoasters?** Tired kids often have a shorter fuse. They may react dramatically to small problems, have frequent outbursts, or struggle to regulate their emotions.

If these behaviours are showing up regularly, screen-related sleep disruption might be part of the puzzle.

How screens sabotage sleep

There are several ways screens interfere with your child's ability to get quality rest:

- **Blue light exposure:** Devices emit blue light that suppresses melatonin, the hormone that signals it's time to sleep.

- **Stimulating content:** Whether it's a fast-paced game or dramatic video, stimulating content keeps the brain active and alert.

- **Emotional arousal:** social media and online interactions can trigger intense emotions—excitement, anxiety, or fear of missing out—that make it harder to wind down.

- **Sleep displacement:** Time spent scrolling or gaming is often time taken directly from sleep.

- **Mental associations:** Using screens in bed can confuse the brain, linking the bedroom with alertness instead of rest.

Five strategies to support better sleep

Thankfully, small changes can make a big difference. Here's how to help your child reclaim their rest:

1. **Introduce a "tech curfew":** Turn off devices at least an hour before bedtime to give the brain time to relax and promote melatonin production.

2. **Make bedrooms screen-free zones:** Keep electronics out of sleep spaces to strengthen the mental link between the bedroom and rest.

3. **Stick to a consistent sleep schedule:** Going to bed and waking up at the same time daily—even on weekends—helps regulate internal rhythms.

4. **Create a soothing wind-down routine:** Encourage activities like reading, gentle stretches, or quiet music to cue the body for sleep.

5. **Support overall sleep hygiene:** Nutritious food, physical activity, and cutting back on sugar or caffeine near bedtime can all support better sleep.

Looking beyond sleep

While reducing screen use and improving sleep habits can go a long way, they're not a silver bullet. If your child continues to face challenges, consider consulting a healthcare professional to explore other potential causes and interventions.

A good night's sleep is more than just rest—it's the foundation for learning, emotional regulation, and overall wellbeing. With mindful screen habits and consistent routines, you can help your child wake up refreshed and ready to shine.

The Hidden Meanings Behind Emojis: What Parents Need to Know

People of all ages use emojis in their digital communications. In addition to adding humour or emphasis to messages, for some communities and peer groups, these symbols can form a language of their own. This is particularly true of young people and teenagers, who sometimes use emojis as a code to disguise their true intentions from adults.

While hidden meanings behind emojis used by young people can be harmless, some may indicate risks including extremism, drugs, sexual interactions and bullying. This was recently brought to life on the Netflix limited series, Adolescence, which depicted the devastating consequences of harmful online interactions, and the warning signs (in the form of emojis) that are easily missed by adults.

To help schools and parents decode potentially harmful messages, we've compiled a list of emojis commonly used in dangerous contexts. This includes specific emojis used on the show, and others highlighted by the work of Olivia Brown, Associate Professor in Digital Futures at the University of Bath.

The harmful hidden meanings behind emojis

Emoji(s)	Potential Meaning
💊 🔴	The red pill emoji is linked to incel, or "involuntarily celibate", culture, where misogynistic and extremist views are prevalent. The meaning originates from The Matrix films but has been adopted by the manosphere to represent those who see the "real truth" in the world.
🔵	The blue pill emoji is used in incel culture to represent the opposite of the red pill - those who are blind to the real truth and adhere to more mainstream views about gender dynamics.
💯	The 100 emoji is used in relation to incel culture. It represents the idea promoted by those in the manosphere that 80% of women are attracted to 20% of men.
🧨	The dynamite emoji is used in incel culture to represent the exploding red pill, in other words, breaking out of societal norms and myths.
🫘	The kidney beans emoji is tied to incel culture. It is thought to represent coffee beans, which link back to a series of memes mocking women.
🔌	The plug emoji can be used to mean drug dealer, also known as a person's "plug".
❄️ 👃 ⛽	The snowflake, nose and petrol pump emojis are all used to represent the drug cocaine.
🐴 🐎	The horse emojis can be used to represent the drug ketamine.

☠ 💀 👽 😈	Skull, alien and devil emojis may represent the drug ecstasy.
🎈	The balloon emoji may be used to represent the drug nitrous oxide.
📹 📷	Camera emojis can represent a request for nude/explicit images or videos.
🍑 🍆 🍒	Peach, aubergine and cherry emojis can all be used to represent body parts in a sexual context.
💦	The sweat emoji may also be used in a sexual context.
😶	The face with no mouth emoji can convey the message "Do not tell anybody". It may be used in a bullying context or when sharing inappropriate, illegal or sensitive information.
🐸	The frog emoji can mean "You're ugly". It is used in bullying or harassment contexts.
❤	Heart emojis can mean different things depending on the colour used. The red heart usually means love.
💜	The purple heart can be used to convey attraction or sexual desire.
💛	The yellow heart may mean "I'm interested, are you interested?"
💖	The pink heart can mean "I'm interested but not in sex."
🧡	An orange heart is more likely to be platonic and means "You're going to be fine."

When monitoring digital interactions for these emojis, it's important to remember that context matters. Their use does not automatically indicate a harmful conversation - the specific circumstances in which a symbol is used will reveal whether it's something that should spark concern. Understanding the hidden meanings behind emojis can be most helpful when they are considered alongside other markers of risk.

Of course, the language used by teenagers is constantly evolving. The meanings of emojis can change from one month to the next, so it's useful to try to stay abreast of the latest slang, as it may offer signs of safeguarding risks.

Curated Content: How Algorithms Shape What Your Child Sees Online

It's useful to have a conversation with your child about how online content is selected and shown to them. Help them understand how data collection and content curation influence their digital experiences and encourage them to think critically while navigating the internet.

What is algorithmic curation?

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to lose track of time on YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram? Maybe you started by watching a quick video about cute animals, and before you knew it, an hour had passed. Have you ever wondered why this happens?

Many websites and apps use something called algorithmic curation. This is a process where computer programs (algorithms) analyse what you watch, like, or search for and then choose what to show you next, based on your interests.

But how do they know what you enjoy? Every click, scroll, and like is tracked and analysed. The more you interact with certain types of content, the more the platform tailors its recommendations to keep you watching for longer. It can feel like magic-unlimited content, perfectly suited to your tastes!

The downsides

Limited perspectives

It's important to keep in mind that while personalised content can be entertaining, it can also make it difficult to take a break from screens. It might also limit exposure to different opinions and viewpoints. If you're only shown content that reinforces what you already believe, it can be harder to understand other perspectives.

Emotional impact

The content you see can also affect your emotions and mood. Watching positive or inspiring videos can uplift you, while consuming too much upsetting or negative content can bring you down. Sometimes, algorithms get things wrong and might show content that isn't appropriate for your age or interests.

Taking action

The good news? You and your child can take control of what you see online. You can adjust settings, block or report inappropriate content, and make conscious choices about what you engage with.

Helping kids understand how online platforms work gives them the skills they need to be thoughtful and informed digital users. Below are some activities that can help with this.

Discussion time

Have you and your child ever disagreed about screen time?

How could you find a balance that works for both of you?

What do you think about companies collecting and selling data?

Would you change anything about how you use the internet after learning this?

Write a letter together

Imagine you are writing to a social media company's privacy team. What would you ask about data collection or content curation? What changes would you suggest? Then, switch roles and pretend to be the company responding to the letter.

Guess the interests (3+ players)

Each write down 10 things you enjoy (hobbies, music, shows, games) on separate pieces of paper. Take turns reading the lists and guessing who they belong to. This helps show how much information can be learned about someone just from their online habits!

FAQs

What's the difference between 'data' and an 'algorithm'?

Data is information collected about users, such as names, emails, or browsing habits. An algorithm is a step-by-step set of instructions that helps computers make decisions—like deciding which videos to recommend next.

Which websites use algorithmic curation?

Many platforms use algorithms to personalise content and keep users engaged. Here are a few:

- **Social Media:**
    - Facebook: Suggests posts and friends based on user interactions.
    - Instagram: Recommends posts, Reels, and Stories tailored to personal interests.
    - TikTok: The 'For You' page is one of the most advanced examples of algorithm-driven content.

- **Streaming Services:**
    - Netflix: Suggests movies and shows based on what you've watched before.
    - YouTube: Curates recommended videos and the 'Up Next' queue.
    - Spotify: Creates personalised playlists based on your listening habits.

- **Search Engines & Online Stores:**
    - Google: Adjusts search results based on previous searches and location.
    - Amazon: Recommends products based on browsing and shopping history.

How to Have Meaningful Online Safety Conversations with Your Child

Below we've shared why it's crucial for parents to foster open conversations with their children about online safety and how to create a supportive environment where kids feel comfortable discussing their digital lives.

Why is it important to talk to your child about online safety?

The internet is now an integral part of our children's daily lives. Whether they are at home, at school, or on the go, they are constantly exposed to digital content. While the internet provides incredible opportunities for learning and social interaction, it also comes with risks that can impact a child's wellbeing and safety.

As a parent, creating an open and judgment-free space where your child feels safe discussing their online experiences is essential. If they encounter harmful situations, early intervention and support can help prevent long-term emotional or psychological harm.

What kind of risks might children face online?

Children may be exposed to various risks while online, including cyberbullying, inappropriate content, online grooming, and harmful trends on social media. For example, recent social media influencers have promoted harmful ideas, such as misogyny and violence, which can influence young minds.

Online bullying is also a significant concern, with nearly 1 in 5 children in the UK experiencing it. Because many of these risks occur in digital spaces that parents may not always monitor, it's important to foster trust so children feel safe speaking up.

Why might children hesitate to talk about negative online experiences?

Many children hesitate to share their concerns for several reasons:

- Fear of retaliation from bullies or online predators.

- Feelings of embarrassment or shame, particularly in cases of online grooming.

- Worry that telling a parent will result in losing access to their devices.

- Fear of being blamed, for example, being told, "I warned you not to use that app."

These concerns can create barriers to communication, which is why it's crucial for parents to adopt a supportive and understanding approach when discussing online safety.

How can parents encourage open conversations about online experiences?

Start by making digital discussions a regular part of family life. Instead of interrogating your child about their online activity, try asking open-ended questions like:

"What's the latest trend on TikTok?"

"Have you seen anything online recently that made you feel uncomfortable?"

"What do you think about this video/game?"

These types of questions encourage your child to share their thoughts and experiences without feeling judged or fearful of consequences.

It's also important to focus on education rather than punishment. If a concern arises, instead of immediately restricting device access, explain why certain safety measures are necessary. For example, discuss how parental controls help protect them rather than making them feel like they are being restricted.

What tools can parents use to keep their children safe online?

There are many tools available to help parents create a safer digital environment for their children. Some key resources include:

- Parental control apps like Qustodio or Net Nanny, which allow you to monitor and manage your child's internet use.

- Online safety hubs such as the NSPCC or Internetmatters.org, which offer guides and tips on how to protect children online.

- Wellbeing apps like Smoothwall Pulse, which provide children with a discreet way to express their feelings and reach out for help if they encounter something distressing online.

A Guide to Understanding the Impact of Harmful Male Stereotypes on Teens

In the digital age, trends like 'HVM' (High-Value Male), 'SIGMA', and 'Alpha Male' are shaping young people's perceptions of masculinity. While these terms are often used casually on platforms like TikTok, they can also reinforce harmful stereotypes, promote misogyny, and discourage emotional expression in boys and men.

As these ideals gain popularity, it's important for parents to be aware of their potential influence. These concepts often present a narrow, unrealistic vision of what it means to be a man—emphasising dominance, isolation, and extreme success while downplaying emotional intelligence and empathy. By understanding these trends and discussing them openly with their teens, parents can help foster a healthier and more balanced view of masculinity.

What do 'HVM', 'SIGMA', and 'Alpha Male' really mean?

If you've heard your teen using terms like 'HVM', 'SIGMA', or 'Alpha Male', you may be wondering what they truly represent. At a surface level, the High-Value Male (HVM) is portrayed as a confident, successful provider with emotional intelligence—attributes that seem positive. However, a problematic side emerges when influencers attach characteristics such as emotional suppression, dominance, and extreme independence to the concept. This distorted portrayal can pressure young men to conform to rigid and potentially unhealthy gender roles.

Similarly, the SIGMA and Alpha Male personas promote an alternative version of masculinity that rejects societal norms in favour of an individualistic, often rigid moral code. Figures associated with these ideologies, such as Andrew Tate, frequently advocate for male dominance and reinforce misogynistic attitudes, shaping young men's beliefs in ways that may negatively impact their relationships and self-image.

The real-world consequences of harmful masculinity stereotypes

These online trends are more than just internet chatter—they can influence real-world behaviour. The normalisation of harmful masculinity ideals may discourage boys from expressing emotions, reinforce unhealthy power dynamics in relationships, and perpetuate outdated gender roles. While many teens use these terms without fully understanding their implications, exposure to such content can subtly shape their worldview over time.

How parents can address these trends with their teens

If you're concerned about your teen's engagement with these trends, the best approach is to initiate a conversation. Here's how:

- **Start with open-ended questions:** Ask your teen what they think about these terms. Questions like, "What does being a High-Value Male mean to you?" or "Have you seen any videos discussing SIGMA or Alpha Males?" can provide insight into their perspective.

- **Encourage emotional intelligence:** Reinforce the idea that expressing emotions and showing vulnerability are strengths, not weaknesses. Let your teen know that true confidence comes from authenticity and emotional connection.

- **Highlight positive role models:** Share examples of men—whether from history, media, or personal life—who embody kindness, compassion, and respect. This helps counteract the rigid and often toxic portrayals of masculinity found online.

- **Teach media literacy:** Encourage your teen to critically analyse online content. Help them question influencer motives and recognise how social media can promote unrealistic, one-dimensional portrayals of masculinity.

- **Create a judgment-free space:** Ensure your teen feels comfortable discussing these topics with you. Listen actively, without immediately dismissing their viewpoints or imposing your own.

- **Seek additional support if needed:** If these trends appear to be negatively affecting your teen's self-esteem or behaviour, consider reaching out to a school counsellor, therapist, or other trusted professional for guidance.

FAQs

Why are terms like 'HVM', 'SIGMA', and 'Alpha Male' trending among teens?

These terms gain popularity through social media, where they tap into young people's desire for identity, self-improvement, and belonging.

Are these trends inherently harmful?

Not always. While some content promotes self-confidence and success, other aspects encourage rigid gender norms and unhealthy attitudes toward relationships and emotions.

How can I tell if my teen is being negatively influenced?

Watch for behavioural changes such as increased aggression, withdrawal, or a fixation on dominance and status. Pay attention to the content they engage with online and the language they use.

What if my teen resists these conversations?

It's natural for teens to be defensive. Approach discussions with curiosity and understanding rather than judgment. Your goal is to help them think critically, not to police their interests.

Should I limit my teen's social media access?

Instead of outright restrictions, focus on educating your teen about critical thinking and media literacy. Encourage them to explore diverse perspectives and question idealised portrayals of masculinity.

Where can I find more resources on healthy masculinity?

Look for books, articles, and documentaries that explore gender roles and emotional intelligence. Professional guidance from therapists or educators specialising in adolescent development can also be valuable.

The ABC Model: How to Create a Safe Online Environment for Your Child

In today's digital world, ensuring your child's online safety is a top priority. The ABC Model provides a structured approach to creating a secure and supportive digital environment for your child, focusing on three key principles: Access, Boundaries, and Communication.

- **Access:** Implementing safety settings, parental controls, and privacy measures to manage and monitor digital exposure.
- **Boundaries:** Establishing clear rules around screen time, online behaviour, and family technology use.
- **Communication:** Engaging in ongoing conversations about online safety, risks, and responsible digital habits.

By following this model, parents can not only protect their children from potential online risks but also help them develop healthy and responsible digital habits.

Access: The digital seatbelt

Giving your child a smartphone, tablet, or gaming console without safeguards is like handing them the keys to a vehicle with no brakes or seatbelts. Ensuring safe access means setting up protective measures before they start using a device.

1. Activate parental controls on devices and apps to filter or block inappropriate content and manage screen time.
2. Use tools like Google Safe Search and YouTube Restricted Mode for children under 10.
3. Implement strict "off" times at night to prevent excessive screen exposure and ensure healthy sleep habits.
4. Adjust privacy settings on social media and gaming platforms to keep your child's identity private and disable unnecessary geolocation features.
5. For younger children, use a parent's email when setting up accounts to maintain control over access and security.

As you apply these settings, engage your child in discussions about online safety. Help them understand the difference between safe and unsafe online behaviours.

Boundaries: The online road rules

Just as road rules keep drivers safe, clear online boundaries help guide children's digital behaviours. Involving your child in setting these rules increases their sense of responsibility and accountability.

1. Create a family tech agreement outlining screen time, appropriate online behaviour, and parental involvement in their digital life.

2. Enforce both positive and negative consequences for online behaviour. Reward responsible usage and address any rule-breaking consistently.

3. Establish screen routines that define when and how devices can be used. Younger children may benefit from structured time slots, while teenagers should have clear "off" times (e.g., no screens after 8pm or no social media during homework).

4. Designate screen-free zones or times in your home to encourage face-to-face interactions. Ensure these rules apply to everyone in the household, including parents, to set a strong example.

By reinforcing boundaries through consistent enforcement and discussions, children learn responsible digital habits that benefit them in the long run.

Communication: The vehicle for digital safety and wellbeing

Open and ongoing communication about online safety is essential. Conversations about digital habits should start early and be an everyday part of family discussions.

1. Get involved in your child's digital world by asking about their favourite apps, games, and online activities. Show genuine interest and keep the conversation positive to encourage openness.

2. Teach younger children about online privacy, the dangers of interacting with strangers, and how personal information can be misused.

3. Discuss more complex topics with older children, including online conflicts, cyberbullying, peer pressure, digital footprints, and the risks of sharing personal content.

4. Encourage your child to come to you with any online concerns. Let them know they can rely on you for support without fear of punishment.

By fostering trust and keeping the dialogue open, you empower your child to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

Final thoughts

Following the ABC Model—Access, Boundaries, and Communication—helps create a secure digital environment where children can explore, learn, and engage online while minimising risks. By implementing safety measures, setting clear expectations, and maintaining open communication, parents can equip their children with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in the digital age.

Healthy Digital Habits: How to be a Role Model for Your Children

In today's world, technology is woven into nearly every aspect of life, making it essential for children to develop responsible digital habits. Since children learn by observing the behaviour of those around them, parents play a crucial role in setting the example for healthy tech use.

Start the conversation early

Open and ongoing communication is the foundation of a healthy relationship with your child, including their digital habits. Since technology will continue to be a major part of their lives, it's important to talk early and often about responsible tech use while demonstrating these behaviours yourself.

Make discussions about technology a natural part of your daily conversations. Alongside asking about their school day, inquire about their online experiences. You can engage them with questions like, "Have you discovered any interesting new games?" or "What's trending in your digital world?" By normalising these discussions, your child will feel comfortable coming to you with concerns or questions about their online interactions.

Establish a family tech agreement

A structured approach to technology use can help create a balanced digital environment. A family tech agreement outlines expectations for screen time, online interactions, and device usage. For the best results, everyone in the household—including parents—should follow the agreed-upon guidelines.

Including your children in the creation of these rules fosters accountability and a sense of empowerment. As they grow, make the agreement more collaborative, particularly with teenagers who will appreciate having input in the boundaries that shape their digital lives.

Encourage tech-free time

Recent studies indicate that people spend an average of nearly seven hours a day on screens. Excessive screen time has been linked to both physical and mental health concerns, making it essential to set aside time away from devices.

Begin by evaluating your own screen habits to identify areas where you can reduce unnecessary tech use. Prioritise quality over quantity—rather than using screens as a default activity, engage in intentional tech use, such as playing an online game together or listening to a podcast as a family.

Create device-free zones, such as during mealtimes or an hour before bed. To reinforce these habits, consider a family charging station in a shared space to prevent devices from interfering with sleep.

Minimise digital distractions

Children naturally seek meaningful interactions, particularly from their family members. When parents are constantly distracted by screens, it can lead to feelings of disconnection and anxiety in their children.

Avoid multitasking with technology, such as scrolling through social media while watching a movie together. If you need to take an urgent call or respond to a work email, communicate this with your child and set a clear timeframe. Reducing notifications or setting your phone to silent can help minimise distractions and improve focus during family interactions.

Promote respectful online behaviour

Just as we teach children to interact politely in person, online etiquette should be modelled as well. Always use respectful communication in digital spaces and obtain consent before sharing information or photos of others, including your children. What you post about them now could impact their digital footprint in the future, so always ask for their permission before sharing personal content online.

Teach privacy and security awareness

Protecting personal information is essential in today's digital landscape. Ensure that devices, apps, and online accounts are secured with strong passwords and up-to-date privacy settings. Educate your child about the importance of safeguarding their personal information, including why they should not share passwords outside of the family.

When your child begins using social media, guide them through setting up privacy controls and discuss what information is appropriate to share publicly. Topics such as avoiding oversharing personal details like home addresses or school locations should be addressed to foster online safety.

Lead by example

Technology should enhance life, fostering convenience and connection rather than causing stress or anxiety. If certain digital content, apps, or platforms no longer serve a positive purpose, don't hesitate to take a break from them. Your children will observe these actions and learn the importance of balancing their own digital habits.

Parental Controls: A Guide to Safe Digital Parenting

In today's digital age, children have easy access to technology, making it essential for parents to ensure their online experiences are safe. Monitoring a child's tech use can be challenging, especially when they are more tech-savvy than their parents. Parental control tools provide an effective way to protect and support children's online activities while reducing parental stress.

Understanding parental controls

Parental controls are tools designed to help parents manage their child's digital activities on smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, and other connected devices. These tools help safeguard children from online dangers such as cyberbullying, predators, inappropriate content, compulsive gaming, and risky online behaviours.

Key features of parental control tools

Different parental control tools offer various features, with the most common including:

- Filtering and Blocking: Prevents access to inappropriate content, such as pornography and violence.
- Screen Time Management: Restricts device usage by time of day or content type.
- Feature Disabling: Allows parents to disable specific device functions, such as cameras or in-app purchases.
- Individual User Profiles: Enables customised settings for each family member.
- GPS Tracking: Monitors a child's location for safety.
- Activity Monitoring and Reporting: Provides insights into online activity to detect potential risks.
- Privacy Protection: Helps safeguard personal information from cyber threats.

Types of parental controls

There are three main types of parental control tools, each serving different purposes:

- Network-Level Controls: These are set up on home routers or hubs to regulate all devices connected to the home's Wi-Fi. They are effective for stationary devices but not for mobile devices using data outside the home.
- Device-Level Controls: Installed directly on smartphones, tablets, and laptops, these tools work regardless of the internet connection type. Examples include apps like Qustodio, which allow parents to manage device usage both inside and outside the home.
- Application-Level Controls: Built into specific apps or platforms, these controls enable users to set privacy settings and content restrictions within individual applications.

19

Debunking common myths about parental controls

There are many misconceptions about parental control tools. Here are some common myths and the truth behind them:

"Parental controls are a way of spying on children."

Reality: Parental controls are designed to enhance child safety, not invade their privacy. They provide visibility in a digital space where risks can be easily hidden.

"Children will always find a way to bypass parental controls."

Reality: While some children may attempt to bypass restrictions, high-quality parental controls include alerts and fail-safes. If your child tries to disable them, it presents an opportunity for a conversation about responsible online behaviour.

"You need to be tech-savvy to use parental controls."

Reality: Many parental control tools, such as Qustodio, offer user-friendly interfaces, step-by-step setup guides, and customer support to make them accessible for all parents.

"My children will resent me for using parental controls."

Reality: While some initial resistance may occur—especially from teens—most children ultimately appreciate their parents' concern for their safety. Open discussions about digital boundaries help foster mutual understanding.

Beyond parental controls: Fostering digital responsibility

Parental controls are a helpful first step in online safety but should be complemented with education and open dialogue. Encouraging children to be responsible digital citizens involves:

- Discussing online interactions, privacy, and cyber risks.
- Teaching empathy, social responsibility, and digital etiquette.
- Promoting positive body image and good mental health in the digital world.

How to Establish a Family Tech Agreement

If you've ever felt like you and your children have different ideas about screen time limits or appropriate online content, you're not alone. A family tech agreement helps eliminate confusion by setting clear expectations for everyone in the household.

Setting clear guidelines for online behaviour and device usage is crucial for maintaining a healthy digital environment at home. A family tech agreement provides a structured way to outline expectations, promote responsible tech use, and encourage open discussions about online risks and responsibilities.

This guide, developed by online safety experts, will assist you in creating a customised agreement tailored to your family's needs.

What is a family tech agreement?

A family tech agreement is a set of established rules that govern how household members interact with technology. Whether using personal or shared devices, the agreement outlines responsibilities and expectations regarding internet usage, ensuring that everyone is aligned on appropriate online behaviour.

By setting boundaries, younger family members can develop decision-making and critical-thinking skills in a safe environment. The agreement also provides parents with a tool for reinforcing consequences when necessary, helping children understand the impact of their digital actions.

Why experts recommend tech agreements

Technology agreements are widely endorsed by digital wellness experts as a means to encourage responsible online engagement. They promote awareness of potential online risks while fostering communication between parents and children.

A structured agreement formalises a child's digital privileges, reinforcing the importance of consistent and respectful online behaviour. It also allows parents to support their children's online interactions while prioritising their safety and wellbeing.

Personalising your family's tech agreement

Each family is different, so customising the agreement to fit your household's needs is essential. Consider these age-specific recommendations to create suitable boundaries for your children:

Ages 4-8

Young children are naturally curious and trusting, making it important to introduce basic online safety concepts. At this stage, establish clear rules regarding who they can interact with online, which platforms they can access, and how long they can use devices. Reinforce the importance of following digital boundaries to ensure their safety.

Ages 9-11

At this age, children begin engaging more with social media and online gaming. Peer influence increases, making them more likely to explore online spaces independently. Set firm guidelines to ensure they understand online behaviour expectations and potential consequences for breaking the rules. Emphasise safe online interactions and responsible digital choices.

Ages 12-14

Preteens and early teens seek greater independence but may still struggle with decision-making. While they may push for more online freedom, they need guidance to navigate digital spaces safely. A family tech agreement offers a way to grant them increased autonomy while maintaining accountability. It also allows parents to reinforce online safety without restricting independence entirely.

Ages 15+

Older teens benefit most from open discussions rather than rigid rules. Instead of requiring a signed agreement, focus on fostering conversations about responsible digital behaviour and online wellbeing. Young people often look to their parents as role models, so demonstrating healthy tech habits is essential.

How to respond when the rules are broken

At some point, rules may be broken, and consequences will need to be enforced. When this happens, refer to the family tech agreement as a reminder of the established expectations. Use these moments as learning opportunities by discussing why the rule was created and brainstorming ways to improve future behaviour. Encouraging open dialogue helps children understand the importance of digital responsibility and accountability.

Other Useful Resources

Report Remove: A service for young people under 18 in the UK to confidentially report sexual images and videos of themselves and remove them from the internet.

Report Harmful Content: Helps internet users report harmful content online by providing up to date information on community standards and direct links to the correct reporting facilities across multiple platforms.

CEOP – Child Exploitation and Online Protection: A reporting service for those worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating with them online.

1 DEFINITION OF A CHILD	2 NO DISCRIMINATION	3 BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD	4 MAKING RIGHTS REAL	5 FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP	6 LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT	7 NAME AND NATIONALITY
8 IDENTITY	9 KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER	10 CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES	11 PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING	12 RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS	13 SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY	14 FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION
15 SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS	16 PROTECTION OF PRIVACY	17 ACCESS TO INFORMATION	18 RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS	19 PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE	20 CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES	21 CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED
22 REFUGEE CHILDREN	23 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES	24 HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT	25 REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT	26 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP	27 FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME	28 ACCESS TO EDUCATION
29 AIMS OF EDUCATION	30 MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION	31 REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS	32 PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK	33 PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS	34 PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE	35 PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING
36 PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION	37 CHILDREN IN DETENTION	38 PROTECTION IN WAR	39 RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION	40 CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW	41 BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES	42 EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

43-54 HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

7 Children must be registered when they are born and given a name which is officially recognized by the government. Children must have a nationality (belong to a country). Whenever possible, children should know their parents and be looked after by them.

6 Every child has the right to be alive. Governments must make sure that children survive and develop in the best possible way.

5 Governments should let families and communities guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights in the best way. The more children grow, the less guidance they will need.

4 Governments must do all they can to make sure that every child in their countries can enjoy all the rights in this Convention.

3 When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents, or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job.

2 All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason.

1 A child is any person under the age of 18.

14 Children can choose their own thoughts, opinions and religion, but this should not stop other people from enjoying their rights. Parents can guide children so that as they grow up, they learn to properly use this right.

13 Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people.

12 Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.

11 Governments must stop children being taken out of the country when this is against the law – for example, being kidnapped by someone or held abroad by a parent when the other parent does not agree.

10 If a child lives in a different country than their parents, governments must let the child and parents travel so that they can stay in contact and be together.

9 Children should not be separated from their parents unless they are not being properly looked after – for example, if a parent hurts or does not take care of a child. Children whose parents don't live together should stay in contact with both parents unless this might harm the child.

8 Children have the right to their own identity – an official record of who they are which includes their name, nationality and family relations. No one should take this away from them, but if this happens, governments must help children to quickly get their identity back.

21 When children are adopted, the most important thing is to do what is best for them. If a child cannot be properly looked after in their own country – for example by living with another family – then they might be adopted in another country.

20 Every child who cannot be looked after by their own family has the right to be looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture, language and other aspects of their life.

19 Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them.

18 Parents are the main people responsible for bringing up a child. When the child does not have any parents, another adult will have this responsibility and they are called a "guardian". Parents and guardians should always consider what is best for that child. Governments should help them. Where a child has both parents, both of them should be responsible for bringing up the child.

17 Children have the right to get information from the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, books and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful. Governments should encourage the media to share information from lots of different sources, in languages that all children can understand.

16 Every child has the right to privacy. The law must protect children's privacy, family, home, communications and reputation (or good name) from any attack.

15 Children can join or set up groups or organisations, and they can meet with others, as long as this does not harm other people.

28 Every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children's rights and never use violence.

27 Children have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live so they can develop in the best possible way. The government should help families and children who cannot afford this.

26 Governments should provide money or other support to help children from poor families.

25 Every child who has been placed somewhere away from home - for their care, protection or health – should have their situation checked regularly to see if everything is going well and if this is still the best place for the child to be.

24 Children have the right to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in. All adults and children should have information about how to stay safe and healthy.

23 Every child with a disability should enjoy the best possible life in society. Governments should remove all obstacles for children with disabilities to become independent and to participate actively in the community.

22 Children who move from their home country to another country as refugees (because it was not safe for them to stay there) should get help and protection and have the same rights as children born in that country.

35 Governments must make sure that children are not kidnapped or sold, or taken to other countries or places to be exploited (taken advantage of).

34 The government should protect children from sexual exploitation (being taken advantage of) and sexual abuse, including by people forcing children to have sex for money, or making sexual pictures or films of them.

33 Governments must protect children from taking, making, carrying or selling harmful drugs.

32 Children have the right to be protected from doing work that is dangerous or bad for their education, health or development. If children work, they have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

31 Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities.

30 Children have the right to use their own language, culture and religion - even if these are not shared by most people in the country where they live.

29 Children's education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.

42 Governments should actively tell children and adults about this Convention so that everyone knows about children's rights.

41 If the laws of a country protect children's rights better than this Convention, then those laws should be used.

40 Children accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment. There should be lots of solutions to help these children become good members of their communities. Prison should only be the last choice.

39 Children have the right to get help if they have been hurt, neglected, treated badly or affected by war, so they can get back their health and dignity.

38 Children have the right to be protected during war. No child under 15 can join the army or take part in war.

37 Children who are accused of breaking the law should not be killed, tortured, treated cruelly, put in prison forever, or put in prison with adults. Prison should always be the last choice and only for the shortest possible time. Children in prison should have legal help and be able to stay in contact with their family.

36 Children have the right to be protected from all other kinds of exploitation (being taken advantage of), even if these are not specifically mentioned in this Convention.

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD – THE CHILDREN'S VERSION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an important agreement by countries who have promised to protect children's rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child explains who children are, all their rights, and the responsibilities of governments. All the rights are connected, they are all equally important and they cannot be taken away from children.

This text is supported by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

child rights connect

unicef
for every child

43-54 These articles explain how governments, the United Nations – including the Committee on the Rights of Child and UNICEF - and other organisations work to make sure all children enjoy all their rights.