

QUESTIONS to Help Secure Our Children in the Digital Age

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What age?

- Decide who decides.
- Be sure you've talked about it with them and talked about it as spouses (and agree) and talked about it with God (prayed about it).
- Should be a function of privilege and trust. Tools, not toys; not rights or rewards.
- NOT out of fear (safety, what if?) or popularity/status (validating peer pressure for them).
- Consensus of experts: 8th Grade or age 14. Check out waituntil8th.org
- Meg Meeker, MD (pediatrician & parenting "expert") = high school
- Whether you buy it or they pay for it (device and/or plan) → it's still under your roof, still within your rule of governance

What kind of devices?

- Preferably the same device you have. Allows you to be most comfortable with it.
- Apple devices generally have more boundaries built in.
- Meg Meeker recommends the Gabb phone, which has unlimited calls and texts but no internet access.

What rules and decisions do we need to make together?

BOUNDARIES → road lines painted // help control the will and build self-control // parents know when children cross them

- General rules and expectations; breaking them loses trust, keeping them gains trust over time

BARRIERS → guardrails // what will keep them from serious missteps // hardware, software, passwords, etc. // these "make up for" the fact that they are more knowledgeable/skilled at technology than you are

- you setting their passwords; apps you control, hardware you install at your home.

What rules should we have (boundaries)?

- Total amount of time (ie, 30 mins/day for social media; 2 hours total screen time)
- Specific hours (ie, morning before school, evenings after supper/homework and before bed)
- Location (ie, not in the bedroom, not at the table)
- Who we talk to, how (texting vs calls), etc.
- What do we do when we run across sinful content?
- Who do we follow on social media (ie, people we know in person)
- We're going to abide by whatever site's rules (ie, age of creating an account)
- No burner phones/devices
- No dummy accounts (ie, my parents know about one account, but my friends know about this other one)
- Don't sign into other people's accounts; don't let others sign into your account
- Decide up front what the consequences are; tie the consequences to the behavior as closely as possible; as infractions increase, so too do the consequences; don't create rules and consequences you won't enforce
- A contract (especially when they have their own device) might be helpful; the carrier gives you a contract to use it, why not have one to use it in this home? → be sure to explain why "big deal" things are a "big deal" and be careful about making everything a big deal

How do we set it up? (barriers) → This will not solve spiritual problems, but they must be a part of the solution.

- Native Parental Settings on the phone
 - o Screen Time on Apple Devices now → needs to be a different passcode than what they use to open their phones
 - o Parental control settings on Android
- Set up their app-purchasing abilities through your account or through your family-sharing account; set it up where they need your approval before downloading a given app
- Gives you the chance to look into it, talk with them about its dangers and about how they can use it for good
- Other tools (other devices & apps)
 - o Covenant Eyes covenanteyes.com (accountability + filtering)
 - o Open DNS opendns.com (free & paid tiers) → firewall system; can set it up for your home and as personal firewalls on your devices
 - o Disney's Circle meetcircle.com (free service with the device.; paid tier for Circle Go! so that it goes everywhere your device goes)

- o Bark bark.us (reads text across all apps; alerts about harmful messages, emphasis on bullying, predators, etc.)
- o Life360 life360.com (tracks location; more robust than “find my iPhone”)
- o OurPact ourpact.com
- o Screen Time app screentimelabs.com

Who else to turn to?

“Dangerous Playground” by Drew Kizer
Chad Landman - <https://www.chadl.co/dpw>

Meg Meeker - megmeekermid.com
Jon Acuff - acuff.me/parents
Henry Cloud - drcloud.com & boundaries.me/blog
My Secure Family - mysecurefamily.com
Covenant Eyes - covenanteyes.com
Melanie Hemp - <https://screenstrong.org/>
“Disconnected” by Dr. Thomas Kersting

Guide to using iOS (Apple’s) parental controls: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201304>
Guide to using Google Play (Android’s) parental controls: <https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738?hl=en>
Guide to using YouTube parental controls: <https://support.google.com/youtubekids/answer/6172308?hl=en>
Guide to using Netflix parental controls: <https://help.netflix.com/en/node/264>
Guide to using Hulu for kids https://help.hulu.com/s/article/restrict-mature-content?language=en_US
Mashable’s guide to streaming services’ parental controls https://help.hulu.com/s/article/restrict-mature-content?language=en_US
VidAngel (for movies and TV shows) vidangel.com
PureFlix (Faith-based streaming service) pureflix.com
ClearPlay for DVDs clearplay.com

Apple Family Safety <https://www.apple.com/families/>
Google Safety Center <https://safety.google/families/>

What if we’re “behind” in our home?

- Start tonight. Work on it somehow every night. You’ll make big strides in 30-60 days.
- List every device in your home that accesses the internet and start working to protect each of them
- Take up devices for 24-48 hours or longer if more severe while you work on a game plan; learn from everyone’s responses.
- Keep devices in plain sight and visible
- Be up front and honest with them about how you’ve let things slide; apologize to them.
- Be up front about your own struggles; commit to improving and growing as a family in these areas.
- Give them a chance in a calm, relaxing setting (ie, walking together in a park, or riding together in a car) to come clean about their digital lives. You can best help them when they’re honest.
- Don’t ever believe the lie that it’s too late
- “Will you ever give up on your kids?”

What about grand parents?

- Work with your child’s parents. Let them ultimately decide; if they’re stricter than you think they need to be, respect their boundaries anyway.
- Talk with your grandchildren in ways that turn them TOWARD their parents and the Lord (ie, your parents love you and are doing their best to help you, I think they’re handling these difficulties better than I handled similar things when they were your age)
- If you’re concerned they’re too loose, then put some boundaries into place while they’re with you.

Final reminder:

1 John 4:18 - Parent out of love instead of out of fear.

18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

Luke 1:37-38 - Angel to a MOTHER to be. response to, “How will this be...?”
37 For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”