



FAMILY MEDIA PLAN  
CONVERSATIONS STARTERS

# Conversations Starters

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## Family Media Plan

Digital media has become part of our daily lives. Families need to understand the benefits and risks of digital media. Creating a family media plan is an excellent way to do this. A family media plan can help families live with their devices in a healthy way, to understand each other's perspectives, to avoid fighting, and to prevent forming unhealthy habits.

We think it is a good idea to sit together as a family and talk about these things. Listen to each other's needs, learn about what each of you likes, and where you spend your time online. Then you can talk about the questions below to make a family media plan that will work in your home.

### Discussion questions for the whole family

- ✓ What do you love doing online? How do you spend your time online?  
What bothers you online? What do you wish you could cut out of your media diet?
- ✓ Do you ever find yourself sucked in, watching, or consuming mindlessly?  
When and where (in what neighborhood) does that happen? How do you deal with it?
- ✓ What do you like doing that has nothing to do with your online life?  
How do you make time for these hobbies?
- ✓ What does the perfect balance for our family look like?

# Screen-Free Areas & Device Bedtime

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Screen-free areas (no-technology areas) are important for creating safe and healthy media habits. Incoming messages and notifications can interfere with rest and can be tempting distractions when we should be sleeping. Use of devices in private spaces gives children opportunities to share inappropriate things and potentially view inappropriate and/or pornographic content. Every family has different routines and needs, but deciding on a time as a family when devices are shut off for the night is a great way to ensure that screens do not interfere with sleep. Agreeing on screen-free areas can also help limit children's access to inappropriate and/or pornographic content.

## Tips

To prevent sleep disruptions, and to limit sharing and seeing inappropriate and pornographic content, we recommend the following:

- ♥ There should not be tablets, computers, mobile phones, televisions, or gaming devices where adults or children sleep;
- ♥ All devices are charged outside of the bedroom in a central location where they are difficult to use at night;
- ♥ For some children, it may be a good idea to charge devices in a parent's bedroom to deter access at night.

## Discussion questions for all of the family

- ✓ What are some areas in our house we would like to keep screen-free at all times?
- ♥ It may be a good idea to think about some areas where devices should not be allowed, such as bedrooms, bath, and toilet areas.
- ✓ Where will we charge the devices to discourage night-time use?
- ✓ What is a logical time for each member of our family to turn off media for the evening? This might be different for each family member.

# Citizenship & Safety

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Thinking about citizenship and safety should not stop when we use electronic devices. Interactions online and offline can have real-world consequences, both negative and positive. Many children say that they do not tell their parents if they have negative experiences online. Your children may not share their mistakes, or may actively hide them from you if they think you will take their devices away from them, or stop them from using the internet. If they can not use their device, children may feel they are not part of friendships or their social life. It is important to recognize that not being able to use digital media can feel like a massive loss for a child who uses it for social connection.

## Tips

To help develop a healthy attitude towards online culture, we recommend that you

- ♥ Regularly and often tell your children what you expect from them;
- ♥ Show how you use the internet in a positive way;
- ♥ Share age-appropriate stories with your children about some of the dangers that exist online;
- ♥ Take an interest in the things your children like online. For example, play games with them;
- ♥ Visit your children's online neighborhood(s) and talk about their online communities;
- ♥ Be open and discuss your feelings about any offensive or problematic material your children share with you;
- ♥ Tell your children about mistakes you've made on- and offline, and about how you solved the problem or changed your behavior.

## Discussion questions for the whole family

- ✓ What should we do when we make mistakes, are not sure about things online, or feel bad about what we have experienced?
- ♥ Share the content with a parent, mentor or teacher you trust as soon as possible.
- ♥ How should we react when we share mistakes?
- ♥ React with compassion/understanding and focus on how to repair the damage;
- ♥ Talk about the experiences or material and how it does or does not fit into your family's values;

# Screen-Free & Family Times

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Using individual mobile devices can also interfere with conversations and family connections. Making certain times of every day screen-free time can help families connect and develop healthy routines.

## Discussion question for the whole family

✓ What are some times in our routines that we would like to be free of personal devices or media?

Some times to consider:

- ♥ Family mealtime, movie night, game night, walks, hikes, picnics etc;
- ♥ Driving or cycling;
- ♥ Riding in the car, except for long trips;
- ♥ One hour before bed.



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