

## SCREEN TIME

### Put Down That Device!

Do you argue daily about time wasted on Snapchat? Or the Xbox? Or YouTube? Technology is inescapable, but without limits teens' academics and relationships suffer. Learn how making them earn it and blocking apps can help.

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"We need to limit screen time!"

"We need to limit video games!" "We need to rein in cell phone use!" If you're the parent of a teenager, chances are good you've uttered these decrees — maybe several times in the last week. And we understand the frustration and motivation for change. The fact is that technology can get in the way of good study habits, distracting our kids from their work and relationships — good reasons why teenagers shouldn't spend all of their time texting or watching YouTube. To start [limiting your teen's screen time](#), consult *Screen-Smart Parenting*, by Jodi Gold, MD, a wonderful guide on balancing social media, apps and digital devices for kids. And follow these nine steps.

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##### #1 Make Them Earn It

Cell phones, computers, and video games should be privileges earned only after your child puts in the work to improve executive function skills and to practice goal-directed persistence. Making them available all the time guarantees too much screen time.

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##### #2 Use Separate Guidelines for Different Ages

The rule of thumb for healthy technology use in 10 to 15 year olds is no more than an hour a day, while [children ages 1 to 3](#) should watch little to no television at all.

*[Free Download: [Too Much Screen Time? How to Regulate Your Teen's Devices](#)]*

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##### #3 Separate Screen Time from Homework

When kids are doing homework they should not be engaged with other things — responding to a text or trying

When kids are doing homework, they should not be engaged with other things – responding to a text, or trying to play a video game while brainstorming for a social studies paper, for example. Homework comes first, then fun on screen time – that is the deal. If homework or test grades suffer because kids are rushing to finish, then screen time is slashed, too. Reinforce the rule that, when free time is limited, priorities need to be completed in a specific order.

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#### #4 Use Blocking Apps

If kids need to use a computer to do homework, block websites from 7-9 every night, or disconnect the computer from the internet. [Freedom](#) is a program that can block internet access during certain hours. [Leechblock](#) works to eliminate access to time-wasting sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. If teens just need a word processor, use [WriteRoom](#) or [Dark Room](#) to limit screens to one use – distraction-free writing during certain times.

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#### #5 Give Technology Breaks

Allow teens to work on homework for 15 minutes, and then take a 5-minute technology break. If your child has trouble getting back to work, then he loses the next technology break or his phone completely the next evening.

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#### #6 Don't Be Afraid to Take Tech Away as a Punishment

Many parents shy away from this consequence because it punishes them, too. Try this: Instead of taking a phone away your child's phone for a week, take it away for a few hours. Let kids earn the privilege back fairly quickly.

*[“How Much Screen Time Is Too Much?”]*

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#### #7 Don't Let Kids Bring Phones or Electronics to Bed

Technology use before bed impacts sleep, which impacts executive functions and school performance. At bedtime, take the phone to your room. Avoid having TVs and computers in bedrooms. Set a timer with a 10-minute warning to help teens finish what they are doing, and ease off of their screens when it gets close to bedtime.

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## #8 Make Kids Earn Screen Time

Give kids a menu of activities. For every 30 minutes they engage in active outdoor play, they earn an equal amount of screen time. Or, if they sign up for a recreational activity, they earn X minutes of screen time.

Reinforce the message that spending too much time doing any one thing is not good for the brain – no matter what that one thing is. Position it as giving kids other ways to stretch and exercise their brains and bodies.

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## #9 Keep Parents Off Screens, Too

If you or your spouse also has ADHD, make sure you are both modeling a good balance with technology. Or, unplug as a family for a whole day every now and then. Use your screen-free time together to play outside, paint a mural, or complete a fun family project.

*[Brilliant Idea Alert! An “Ethics Manual” for Your Teen’s Electronics]*