

Family grapples with kids' tech time

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Bill and Linda Russell, with their children (left to right) Ryan, Lily and Liam

Parental diligence and a few rules allow the good with less risk.

(HealthDay)—Every Christmas, Linda Russell knows her three children's wish lists will be chock-full of requests for the latest in electronic toys and gadgets. And, like most parents, she struggles to know when to give in and get the requested new computer or when to say no to the latest video game.

"It's a toss-up," she said. "Sometimes it seems like the electronics provide a benefit, like computers—it surprises me how much information is at their fingertips. Whatever subject they might be interested in, all they have to do is [Google](#) it, and the information is so accessible. It's fantastic." Plus, she said, they really can't do without a computer for [schoolwork](#) anymore.

However, Russell, who lives in Croton on Hudson, N.Y., also noted

concerns often voiced by parents.

"Sometimes, they completely zone out—whether it's the computer or video games, [and] I worry they may get too disconnected from real life," she said.

She also worries about her youngest, at age 8, being exposed to things past her maturity level. Her two oldest, 17- and 15-year-old boys, like to play video games, and much of that content just isn't appropriate for an 8-year-old, she explained.

"I don't want to punish the older ones and tell them they can't play because of the younger one," she said, so the family has designated a room in the home where the boys can set up their games and where their younger sister isn't allowed when her brothers are [playing video games](#).

Russell took another step to make sure that the electronics aren't keeping anyone up at night, setting up a family [charging station](#) out of the bedrooms. "Ideally, we have everything in one place at night," she said.

If the family's rules aren't followed, Russell said, she and her husband don't hesitate to take away the devices. "With video games, you can take away the controllers and leave the game in place," she pointed out.

Though electronics definitely pose a parenting challenge, Russell said, the benefits probably outweigh the extra time needed to watch over kids' technology time.

More information: A companion article explores things to think about when [giving kids electronic gifts](#).

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