

How parents can set safe and healthy media limits

February 26 2024, by Roslyn Gerwin, DO, and Suzy Tomopoulos, MD, FAAP, American Academy of Pediatrics



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As a parent, you can talk with your child about media use, setting healthy limits and being responsible citizens online. But how can you reinforce healthy digital habits when they're not with you? Parental media controls can be a great option to help keep children's media time happy and safe.

As a parent, you should always feel comfortable taking steps to ensure your kids' media use is safe and appropriate. In fact, all families should have conversations about healthy media limits.

Parental controls are important teaching points for kids to learn how to manage their online experiences. Remember, it's not just about fixing a problem. These talks can be helpful even if [screen time](#) isn't an issue.

There are many resources with information about the most popular video games and [social media platforms](#). Many include feedback from other parents and kids, along with discussions about the features, benefits and drawbacks of controls. Many also offer clear, user-friendly instructions. You can find examples at these websites: Common Sense Media, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, Google Family Link and Apple Parental Controls.

There are parental controls for all devices, including video game consoles, smartphones, tablets and sometimes even desktop computers.

Parental control options include blocking websites and apps; filtering content (such as by age rating); setting time limits; chat and text monitoring; and spending. Devices such as smartphones and tablets can show how much time all [family members](#) spend on them. Sometimes families do not realize how much time is spent on media. So this can be a helpful activity. Apple Screen Time and Google Family Link offer screen trackers, for instance.

Screen time tracking can also spark a conversation as to what other

activities are being crowded out by screen time. How media is being used can be just as important as how much time is being consumed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics Family Media Plan is another valuable resource to guide and inspire family discussions about mindful media use. The tool can help families find ways to balance screen time with other activities as well as to set boundaries. You can choose a few topic areas to focus on initially that they want to try out.

The Family Media Plan provides practical tips and encourages age-appropriate thinking and discussion about digital media. The goal of this tool is to help families feel less overwhelmed and help find alternatives for healthy on- and off-line activities.

We know that parental controls and limit setting work better alongside positive family communication and relationship-building. Don't just make rules! Play video games as a family. Co-view media. Encourage your child to teach you about their online activities.

Also, while adults know healthy media limits are important, don't be surprised if your child disagrees. In fact, you should expect some possible behavior issues in reaction to limit setting. Staying consistent and following through are key to getting through these as your child learns healthier media habits.

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