



## Useful Tips for Setting Technology Boundaries

Most teens don't enjoy being glued to their phones for hours. They want to spend more time offline and are open to working with parents to establish healthy time limits. What they need from you is guidance in setting realistic and manageable rules. Here are some ways to navigate these conversations:

1. **Set time limits together:** Collaborate with your teen to create reasonable time limits for social media and gaming. It's easy to get caught up and lose track of time when navigating the online world, so agreeing on limits in advance can help prevent that. These limits should be tailored to our schedules and needs—for instance, more flexibility during school breaks or weekends.
2. **Track and assess screen time:** Encourage your teen to monitor their screen time and periodically review whether it's staying within the limits you both agreed on. Make shared goals, check daily and weekly usage and have open discussions about any excess time. Explore why any excessive time happened and make adjustments to goals as needed.
3. **Create "phone-free" spaces:** Set up spaces in your home where screens aren't allowed—like the dinner table, bedrooms, or family outings. This can also extend to places you regularly visit, like friends' houses or restaurants. Creating these zones encourages face-to-face interactions, helping your teen stay connected to the world around them.
4. **Build trust, not surveillance:** Focus on creating a culture of trust rather than monitoring or invading privacy. Have conversations about what trust looks like when it comes to technology use. Consider asking questions like:
  - a. How can I show you I trust you with your phone?
  - b. How should I express concerns if I feel trust is being broken?
  - c. How can you show that you're responsible with your phone?
  - d. If you're worried about my (guardian) phone use, how should we address that?

Building this understanding can reduce the pressure and help us feel respected.

5. **Lead by example:** Model the behavior you want to see. Rather than simply making rules, model good screen habits yourself. If you're constantly checking your phone or laptop, it can feel like a double standard. Approach these discussions like a coach or mentor, guiding your teen in making smart choices, rather than just dictating what they should do.
6. **Talk about internet safety:** Regularly discuss online dangers, like cyberbullying, catfishing, or even predators, which can show up in unexpected places. Make sure your



child understands the risks and knows how to recognize, avoid, and handle unsafe situations. Be candid about the dangers and how to recognize and manage uncomfortable situations. Most importantly, build a trusting relationship so they feel safe coming to you if they ever encounter these issues, knowing you'll listen and support them without judgment.

#### **Additional Insights to Consider:**

- **Mental health effects:** You might also discuss how screen time can impact mental well-being. Teens often experience anxiety or FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) due to social media, so setting limits can help reduce stress. Encourage self-awareness, and explain how too much time online can sometimes cause emotional fatigue.
- **Physical health considerations:** Screen time doesn't just affect our minds; it can impact our physical health too. Eye strain, poor posture, hand and finger aches due to repetitive motions, and lack of physical activity are common concerns, so having limits supports overall well-being.
- **Creating personal goals:** Create personal goals alongside screen time limits, like learning a new skill, reading more, or participating in an extracurricular activity. This gives everyone something positive to work toward and helps shift focus from screen time to offline achievements.

#### **For Other Resources Check Out:**

- Robbie's Hope Resources at <https://robbies-hope.com/resources/>
- Common Sense Media's Tips for the Online World at <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/digital-skills>
- Smart Social, How to Shine Online at <https://smartsocial.com/>
- Robbie's Hope Foundation (2020). *Robbie's Hope Technology Handbook*. [Pamphlet]