

QUICK GUIDE TO SAFER SCREEN HABITS



Let's flip the concept of screen safety on its head and get our kids to set the rules (wait, what!!!) Ok, don't panic. There's a method to this madness. Kids are genuinely great problem-solvers. This guide is all about asking the right questions. Then allowing kids to come up with ways to help build **Safer Screen Habits!**

WHAT YOU NEED

- A place to record ideas: i.e., chalkboard, whiteboard, poster board, or notepad
- Your whole family gathered in one room. (Think: Family Power Meeting!)

THROW OUT THE CONTRACT

Typically family media guides, internet safety plans, phone contracts, etc., have a list of rules that everyone is expected to sign ... in blood (kidding). The problem with this model is that you end up coming across as the enemy of tech. Kids are more likely to sneak tech after hours or find creative ways around your parental controls—putting kids at risk.

TIME: 30 TO 45-MINUTES

HOW IT WORKS

Building **Safer Screen Habits** means starting with the big picture. It's like the analogy of filling a jar with stones. Put the big pieces (priorities) in first. Give space to what's most important. And let everything else fill in around that.

We like to say, *"Stop thinking about screen time as good or bad and start thinking about our family time in terms of priorities."*

Get kids thinking about goals, projects and dreams. What are they working on right now? What do they hope to do someday? Write it down together. Remind kids that tech isn't the enemy, but it can easily distract us from getting things done. It can also open doors to harmful and dangerous content.

PRIORITY

YES!

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ask your kids to list the screen-free activities they enjoy

- Personal interests: Home-based hobbies and activities
- Physical activities: Outdoor play, games and exercise
- Skills and training: Sports, clubs, or lessons

FUN WITH TECH

OK

List everyone's favorite ways to use tech

- Communication: Social media, email, texting, video chatting
- Entertainment: TV, YouTube, movies, video games
- Work and education: Homework, research, work obligations

NO!

WARNING SIGNS

Discuss the dangers and risks that accompany the use of tech

IMPORTANT: Make sure kids have a chance to add their own insights here.

- Content—pornography and other inappropriate content
- Contact—secret conversations, bullying, contact from strangers
- Conduct—use the "Would you say it in front of Grandma?" test

CREATE SOME TECH FREE ZONES

Now think about where and when your family uses tech. Keep circling back to the idea of filling time with meaningful activities, relationships, and quiet moments to reflect and be still.

This means being intentional about “white space” when not using tech.

BEDROOM BOUNDARIES

Some families insist, no tech in the bedrooms. Others lighten the rules for older teens. Whatever you decide, remember that online predators are eager to get kids behind closed doors. Teach kids, from day one, that there should be no secrets kept on tech.



FAMILY NIGHT

Get in the habit of dedicating one night a week for just family (even for an hour). Make it fun and interactive (sports, board games, baking, etc.). Set phones and other devices aside for a while.



DINNER TIME

Make it standard that tech doesn't come to the table. Instead, use this time to check up on each other's day. Ask silly questions. Or discuss important events. Refer to the news.

CAR RIDES & ROAD TRIPS

Let's be honest, tech has made long cross-country trips to Grandma's house easier to manage. But be careful not to overuse it. Some families decide that phones and devices stay off during short drives to make room for spontaneous conversation.

CONNECT SAFER SCREEN HABITS TO FAMILY VALUES

Every family needs a plan to keep safe in a media saturated world. Take the time to talk about WHY you are doing this! You are a family. You have values and you want to stick to those values. Talk about how tech can distract or take away from that vision.

The next two activities can help kids feel a greater drive to build **Safer Screen Habits**. Consider setting aside a separate time to create a family motto and a family crest. Ask kids to really think about what matters most.

Example

We are the Jones Family. We value friendship, honesty, and compassion. We love music and dance. We are happiest when we can laugh out loud together.

FAMILY MOTTO

Do you have a family motto? Try creating one. List the things that mean the most to you. Put them into one simple statement. Display the motto somewhere prominent in your home—preferably next to your **Safer Screen Habits** plan.



FAMILY CREST

This is a fun activity for kids of all ages. The overall design can be as elaborate or minimal (stick figure) as you like. Divide your crest into three or four sections. Think of symbols that represent who you are as a

family. Do you love adventure? Books? Science? Travel? What animal best represents your family, and why? Have fun with this.

These two activities can be fun. But they also carry deep significance. When kids feel connected to family and to family values they tend to make smarter decisions when faced with the challenges that come with growing up in a media saturated world.

REVIEW YOUR SAFER SCREEN HABITS OFTEN

Technology is ever changing. Kids are always growing. The **Safer Screen Habits** you start today will need some amendments along the way. Review your goals every 6 to 12 months. Consider displaying your poster board or chalkboard in plain sight for a few weeks. Refer to it when tech use gets off track. The ultimate goal is to coach our kids to make their own healthy choices when it comes to screen safety.