



IMMANUEL COLLEGE

PARENT RESOURCES

Healthy Digital Habits: How to be a Role Model for Your Children

In today's world, technology is woven into nearly every aspect of life, making it essential for children to develop responsible digital habits. Since children learn by observing the behaviour of those around them, parents play a crucial role in setting the example for healthy tech use.

START THE CONVERSATION EARLY

Open and ongoing communication is the foundation of a healthy relationship with your child, including their digital habits. Since technology will continue to be a major part of their lives, it's important to talk early and often about responsible tech use while demonstrating these behaviours yourself.

Make discussions about technology a natural part of your daily conversations. Alongside asking about their school day, inquire about their online experiences. You can engage them with questions like, "Have you discovered any interesting new games?" or "What's trending in your digital world?" By normalising these discussions, your child will feel comfortable coming to you with concerns or questions about their online interactions.

ESTABLISH A FAMILY TECH AGREEMENT

A structured approach to technology use can help create a balanced digital environment. A family tech agreement outlines expectations for screen time, online interactions, and device usage. For the best results, everyone in the household—including parents—should follow the agreed-upon guidelines.

Including your children in the creation of these rules fosters accountability and a sense of empowerment. As they grow, make the agreement more collaborative, particularly with teenagers who will appreciate having input in the boundaries that shape their digital lives.

ENCOURAGE TECH-FREE TIME

Recent studies indicate that people spend an average of nearly seven hours a day on screens. Excessive screen time has been linked to both physical and mental health concerns, making it essential to set aside time away from devices.

Begin by evaluating your own screen habits to identify areas where you can reduce unnecessary tech use. Prioritise quality over quantity—rather than using screens as a default activity, engage in intentional tech use, such as playing an online game together or listening to a podcast as a family.

Create device-free zones, such as during mealtimes or an hour before bed. To reinforce these habits, consider a family charging station in a shared space to prevent devices from interfering with sleep.



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MINIMISE DIGITAL DISTRACTIONS

Children naturally seek meaningful interactions, particularly from their family members. When parents are constantly distracted by screens, it can lead to feelings of disconnection and anxiety in their children. Avoid multitasking with technology, such as scrolling through social media while watching a movie together. If you need to take an urgent call or respond to a work email, communicate this with your child and set a clear timeframe. Reducing notifications or setting your phone to silent can help minimise distractions and improve focus during family interactions.

PROMOTE RESPECTFUL ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

Just as we teach children to interact politely in person, online etiquette should be modeled as well. Always use respectful communication in digital spaces and obtain consent before sharing information or photos of others, including your children. What you post about them now could impact their digital footprint in the future, so always ask for their permission before sharing personal content online.

TEACH PRIVACY AND SECURITY AWARENESS

Protecting personal information is essential in today's digital landscape. Ensure that devices, apps, and online accounts are secured with strong passwords and up-to-date privacy settings. Educate your child about the importance of safeguarding their personal information, including why they should not share passwords outside of the family.

When your child begins using social media, guide them through setting up privacy controls and discuss what information is appropriate to share publicly. Topics such as avoiding oversharing personal details like home addresses or school locations should be addressed to foster online safety.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Technology should enhance life, fostering convenience and connection rather than causing stress or anxiety. If certain digital content, apps, or platforms no longer serve a positive purpose, don't hesitate to take a break from them. Your children will observe these actions and learn the importance of balancing their own digital habits.

By modeling responsible tech behaviours, maintaining open communication, and setting clear expectations, you can help your child develop a healthy relationship with technology that will serve them well throughout their lives.