TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Media and Digital Literacy: Resources for Parents

Young people are immersed in technology in ways previous generations could not have imagined. Common Sense Media has compiled this list of resources for parents seeking advice and information about how to help their children explore smartly and stay safe.

By *Common Sense Media*

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Editor's Note: *Kids are growing up on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter -- spending hours every day creating, communicating, and connecting in digital spaces. Whether you're a tech-savvy parent or a technophobic one, you're probably looking for tools to help your family navigate the many issues that come along with our media- and technology-saturated society. This digital world, which can bring young people incredible resources and learning opportunities, also opens up the very real parenting challenges of managing non-stop screen time, preventing cyberbullying, finding age-appropriate content, and more.* **Common Sense Media** (http://www.commonsensemedia.org) *is an organization that provides essential resources for families to manage the*

impact of challenges like this. We've asked their editors to compile a list of their most popular articles and tip sheets to guide parents as they raise responsible and thoughtful digital citizens.

Family Media Management

From movies to TV to games, kids are spending more time with electronic devices than ever before. Common Sense Media encourages parents to take control of the media and technology in their family's life in order to maintain a balance of rich learning experiences with entertainment.

Tip: Use media together. Whenever you can, watch, play, and listen with your kids. Talk about the content. When you can't be there, ask them about the media they've used. Help kids question and analyze media messages. Share your own values. Let them know how you feel about solving problems with

violence, stereotyping others, selling products using sex or cartoon characters, or advertising to kids in schools or movie theaters. Help kids connect what they learn in the media to real-life events and other activities -- like playing sports and creating art -- in order to broaden their understanding of the world.

Internet Safety and Online Privacy

In today's world, where sharing is becoming the norm, there's a lot of talk about privacy and online reputation. Everything kids say or do online can affect how others view their character. These articles offer parents insight into how companies can collect and use their kids' data and personal information -- and what they can do about it.

Tip: Explain that nothing is really private online. It's crucial for kids to guard their own online privacy by not posting and sharing things they don't want to become public. A few more tips: Ask permission before you go online. Never share passwords. Keep personal details -- name, address, phone number, how much money your parents make -- to yourself. Think before you post -- is this really something you want to share? Only communicate with people you know -- never chat with or send photos to strangers.

Social Networking and Virtual Worlds

Now more than ever, kids are chatting, sharing, and connecting on social networking sites. ***The latest research from Common Sense*** **(http://www.commonsense.org/research)** reveals that teens are avid, daily users of social media, and 75% of them currently have a profile on sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Formspring. While they can use social tools to get the best of what the Web has to offer, tragic stories of cyberbullying seem to be a daily news staple. These tips and resources will help parents keep kids' online lives responsible, respectful, safe, and private.

Tip: Help kids understand the line between funny and cruel. Kids' online communication is often purposely ambiguous or accidentally cruel -- both of which can lead to misunderstandings. If drama starts brewing, ask your kid to call or speak face-to-face with their friend to clear it up.

Role Models and Stereotypes

Kids look up to celebrities...

...and take their cues from people they admire. Too much sexy material and violent imagery can affect their behavior and the choices they make. Body image, self-esteem, and weight issues are all affected by the media that young people watch, play, and interact with. These articles help explain the influence of celebrity culture and media stereotypes. They'll help parents make healthy, age-appropriate choices for their family.

Tip: Grab the headlines, and make them teachable moments. If you see teen drinking on a TV show -- or you see pictures on the Internet of celebs smoking pot or getting arrested for drunk driving -- check in with your kids. For young kids, see how much they understand. Grade-schoolers get a lot of confusing information from their peers, so set the facts straight. For preteens, turn celebrity misbehavior into teachable moments by letting them know what you think about the behavior. And for teens, ask questions. For example, if a celebrity they like is in trouble with alcohol, ask whether their peers are using alcohol or whether they have any anxieties or questions about drinking. Take time to share your opinions -- and expectations -- about the issues.

Educational Issues

We all want our kids to succeed in school. We want to reinforce classroom learning and values at home and be well-equipped to address some of the issues that come up while our kids are navigating technology and digital media to support their schoolwork. These articles will help families guide their kids to make smart, ethical decisions in their digital lives.

Tip: Don't assume that your children automatically know what's right and wrong. The digital world operates with different rules -- that is, wherever rules even exist. Establish rules about use right from the start. Make sure kids have cited their material, clearly indicating where they found that statistic, that insight, that map. Be explicit about what is and isn't acceptable behavior. Don't assume they know. And make sure you have real consequences for breaking the rules.