

Family Technology Plan



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Technology: Be Intentional

“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” Proverbs 29:18

Technology can be used for many different purposes, and there are many different ways to access technology. Being intentional about how you and your family will approach the topic of technology can help ensure technology is seen with a proper perspective. This Family Technology Plan resource is meant to help with this intentionality. It is not meant to be exhaustive in nature, but it is meant to give guidance and begin discussion for families in these areas. Technology is neither good nor evil-it can be used for both. It is also important to recognize the different uses of technology, from typing a school paper to reading an e-book to watching TV to viewing inappropriate material. It is helpful to identify ways technology can be used for evil and engage in ways to teach and protect against those things in your home. It is equally important to identify how your family will engage technology in the areas that are both good and grey (morally neutral) such as using a tablet to read an e-book.

- What aspects of technology do you consider good, evil, and grey (morally neutral)?
- How much of your child’s day do you want him/her interacting with technology?
 - How much time will your child need to spend interacting with technology to complete necessary tasks? (i.e.school work)
 - How much time do you want technology to be used for pleasure or relaxation? (i.e. learning about trivial things, engaging social media, reading/listening to/watching things they are interested in)

Training Your Child:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Deuteronomy 6:4-9

A consistent thread throughout scripture is that God uses challenges and trials to train his children. Parenting is both a joy and a challenging journey. One of the aspects of parenting that makes the journey both full of joy and full of challenge is navigating the shift from a helpless infant to a person who has their own thoughts, beliefs, and ability to engage those thoughts and beliefs. Through this journey the parent is encouraged to “train up a child” (Proverbs 22:6) so the child is able to know and follow God’s commandments as they get older. This journey is often full of disagreements between the parent and child about how much freedom vs. parental oversight is needed. The child often feels more confident to engage in choices and challenges than they should, and often the parent has difficulty giving additional freedoms to a child who is still growing and maturing. Technology can be a battleground for parents and children. This is why it is so important to start engaging this topic while your child is young and continue to see the topic as an opportunity to train your child in truth throughout their life.

- How will you train your child to think about technology?
- How will you teach your child to avoid evil, engage good, and develop self-control?
- Communication and modeling are two significant aspects of training and teaching.
 - How, when, and with what frequency will you communicate with your child concerning the topic of technology?
 - What and how will you model what you desire to grow in your child? (consider the teaching above in *Deuteronomy 6:4-9*)

Questions to Consider When Developing a Family Technology Plan:

1. Are you developing a proactive or reactive technology plan for your family?
2. How many devices connect to media? (radio, TV, internet, Alexa)
3. What are the types of devices used in your home? (TV, game systems, computer, tablet, phone, Google home, etc.)
4. What are the ages of children in your home?
5. What do you want your kids to view/hear?
6. How much time each week would you like your whole family to be together?
7. What do you want your family interaction to look like when your family is together?
8. Three questions to consider for your child's time interacting with technology:
 - a. When will they be able to access technology?
 - b. Where will they access it from?
 - c. Who will be accessing technology with them (parent, friends, alone) and what determines which is appropriate?
9. Are there different levels of accessibility for individuals in the home? (i.e. what devices does the 4 yr. old get to access vs. the 9 yr. old vs. the 16 yr. old vs. the 20 yr. old vs. the parent?)
10. What determines how much media access an individual can have? (age, maturity, ability to manage free time, desire to access, etc.)
11. How will you allow greater access to technology but also maintain the ability to monitor and protect the family?
12. How do you want to limit visitors to your home and their access to your technology?

Technology Plan for Children ages 0-2

Goal for the Time Period:

Develop a secure attachment by being consistent in providing for their needs and responding to their cues for attention. Love and care for child by actively engaging child through physical touch, verbal interaction, providing for basic needs, and other nurturing behaviors.

Skills to Build:

- Wait to eat until after praying
- Falling asleep without mom or dad
- Being able to get what they want on own (i.e. walk across room and get toy they want)
- Communicate (words, sign language, pointing, etc.) what they want in more ways than screaming

Building Relationship with Your Child:

- Get on the floor and play with child.
- Hold your child.
- Talk to your child.
- Smile at your child
- Comfort your child.

Examples of Boundaries:

1. Less than 30 minutes of “screen time” daily. (videos, computer, tablets, etc.)
2. No “screen time” while in vehicle for less than 30 minutes.
3. Little to no “screen time” while extended family/friends are present.
4. Parents set personal limits on amount of free time in front of a screen.
5. Filters to block inappropriate material. (Appendix A)

Technology Plan for Children ages 3-5

Goal for the Time Period:

Child is to learn they are under your authority and therefore obey your instruction. Be the authority in the home without becoming over controlling and rigid. You are the authority and you want to develop a warm trusting relationship with your child by being open to hearing them, playing with them, and being willing to let unimportant things go. At this stage in the child's life they need you to set limits and learn healthy ways of expressing frustrations. Starting to build these skills at this age will be trying for parents but incredibly valuable for the child. Do not get frustrated when it seems they are making no progress in these skills; be consistent, patient, and maintain a positive relationship with your child.

Skills to Build:

- Verbally express thoughts and feelings
- Learn to express sadness, disappointment, anger without throwing temper tantrum
- Sharing toys with others
- Being kind to peers/siblings

Building Relationship with Your Child:

- Watch, listen to, and play with child so you know what they are seeing, hearing, and playing.
- Explain why you will not allow child to watch, listen to, or play certain things.
- Be willing to listen to child's frustrations, objections, and disagreements while standing firm on established boundaries.
- Talk with child about limits/boundaries you have for yourself.
- Discuss appropriate boundaries in social situations (visitors coming to your house, going to visit others) such as putting aside technology and engaging relationships. If technology is engaged while around others, discuss what is acceptable and why.

Examples of Boundaries:

- Less than 1 hour of “screen time” daily. (videos, computer, tablets, etc.)
- No “screen time” while in vehicle for less than 30 minutes.
- No “screen time” while friends are present unless they are included and limited to less than 30 minutes.
- Parents set personal limits on amount of free time in front of a screen.
- Devices (phones, computers, tablets) have filters and/or codes to assess material not appropriate for child. (i.e.: YouTube, Facebook, etc.)
- Filter Options (Appendix A)

Technology Plan for Elementary School

Goal for the Time Period:

Child is to respect parent's authority by obeying and respectfully talking with the parent when they disagree with parents' decisions or instruction. This is also time period for child to continue to build relationships with peers. Parents will need to work at giving their child enough freedom to express their thoughts, desires, and opinions so they can help their child begin to navigate challenges that will likely begin to show up with peers and authority figures.

Skills to Build/Continue Building:

- Communicate thoughts, feelings, desires in an open and respectful manner
- Recognize how their actions affect others (i.e. teaching concept of empathy)
- Learn to take responsibility for their actions
- Play alone and with others
- Spiritual: Bible reading, prayer, service to others

Building Relationship with Your Child:

- Watch, listen to, and play with child so you know what they are seeing, hearing, and playing.
- Listen to child's frustrations, objections, and disagreements while standing firm on established boundaries. Explain why you will not allow child to watch, listen to, or play certain things.
- Talk with child about limits/boundaries you have for yourself.
- Discuss boundaries in social situations, such as putting aside technology and engaging relationships. If technology is engaged while around others, discuss what is acceptable and why.
- Identify ways for child to demonstrate responsibility, willingness to follow instruction, and openly communicate with parents about what is going on in their world.

- Allow your child freedom to grow as they demonstrate responsibility, character, and maturity to effectively manage greater freedom. When children make mistakes (and they will), use as an opportunity to engage in discussion and develop a plan forward.

Examples of Boundaries:

- Less than 1 hour of time away from school spent on “screen time” daily. (videos, computer, tablets, etc.)
- No “screen time” while in vehicle for less than 30 minutes.
- No “screen time” while friends are present unless they are included and time limited to less than 1 hour.
- Parents set personal limits on amount of free time in front of a screen.
- Devices (phones, computers, tablets) have filters and/or codes to assess material not appropriate for child. (i.e.: YouTube, Facebook, etc.)
- Filter Options (Appendix A)

Technology Plan for Middle School

Goal for the Time Period:

Parents are to shift into more of a teaching role while continuing to set limits and maintaining authority in the home. This is also a time period for child to continue to build relationships with peers. Parents will need to work at giving their child enough freedom to express their thoughts, desires, and opinions so they can help their child begin to navigate challenges that arise with peers and authority figures.

Skills to Build/Continue Building:

- Stewardship: time, money, possessions
- Responsibility: completing tasks/chores, admitting mistakes, getting up in the morning
- Relationships: see value in relationships, grow family relationship, see difference between positive and negative relationships
- Spiritual: Bible reading, prayer, service to others

Building Relationship with Your Child:

- Ask your child about their day every day.
- Set aside one on one time with each of your children weekly.
- Touch: give your child appropriate physical touch.
- Talk to your child.
- Do activities with your child.

Examples of Boundaries:

- No devices that access the internet in bedroom after 8pm.
- Cannot be on internet, playing games, or on phone before school unless ready to walk out the door.
- No “screen time” on Sunday mornings.
- Parents will have passwords to all personal accounts: email, social media, etc.
- Parents will be added as “friends” in all social media accounts.

- “Free time” in front of a “screen” (after homework, chores, family time, and other responsibilities have been met) will be limited to one hour daily Monday-Friday and two hours Saturday and Sunday.
- If child demonstrates enough maturity to have a phone, a cell phone agreement (Appendix B) will be developed.
- Have an ongoing evaluation process (Appendix D) where you are able to evaluate child’s personal growth (how they use time, how technology is used, what is being viewed, how edifying is communication, etc.) and where boundaries need to be strengthened/reduced.
- Parents are to talk with child about personal boundaries they have around technology. (limit “screen time”, what are off limits for you to view, other limits you have for yourself)
- Filter Options (Appendix A)

Technology Plan for High School

Goal for This Time Period:

Teens are to effectively manage freedoms while continuing to allow parents to teach and provide wisdom which comes from experience. Teens are to begin developing personal identity such as solidifying what they believe, character they see as important, how they will view relationships, and how they will be similar/different from parents. Parents are to allow teens freedom to wrestle through these topics while providing them with sound, biblical counsel.

Skills To Build/Continue Building:

- Stewardship: time, money, possessions
- Responsibility: completing tasks/chores, admitting mistakes, managing own schedule
- Relationships: honesty, trust, empathy, kindness, conflict management, self-denial
- Spiritual: how to study the Bible, prayer, service to others

Building Relationship with Your Teen:

- Prioritize time in your day to allow opportunity for teen to talk. This may be at a time that is inconvenient for you such as late at night.
- Do activities with your teen (clean, home project, set up computer, work on the car, make supper, host guests, etc.).
- Touch: give your teen appropriate physical touch.
- Talk to your teen every day even if it is through text message.

Examples of Boundaries:

- No devices that can access the internet in bedroom after 10pm.
- Limit “screen time” that is not necessary for school or learning to less than 2 hours daily.
- Parents will have passwords to all personal accounts: email, social media, etc.
 - As teen demonstrates responsibility and maturity this should shift toward parents having less access to these accounts.
- Parents will talk with child about personal boundaries they have around technology. (limit “screen time”, what are off limits for you to view, other limits you have for yourself)
- Develop a cell phone agreement. (Appendix B)
- Have an ongoing evaluation process (Appendix D) where you are able to evaluate teen’s personal growth (how they use time, how technology is used, what is being viewed, how edifying is communication, etc.) and where boundaries need to be strengthened/reduced.
- Filter Options (Appendix A)

Appendix A:

Quick Reference Guide to Internet Filters

Internet filtering programs are important tools for properly utilizing technology. Two primary types of Internet safety software are available:

1. **Filtering/blocking software** denies access to inappropriate material and/or blocks access to the Internet within established time boundaries.
2. **Monitoring software** provides accountability by allowing a parent/accountability partner to see what another person is doing online.

The following products represent a short list of some of the most effective Internet filtering and monitoring tools we have found. This list should not be taken to imply any of the products are flawless. Each tool has its own strengths and weaknesses, and their functions and abilities change constantly. Individuals interested in using any of the following tools will need to check the computer system requirements for each product (some products may not be compatible with your computer operating system and/or mobile phone). Most filtering/monitoring software is purchased by subscription, which ensures continual updates. We suggest taking advantage of the trial period most companies offer to see if a product is adequate for your needs and you are comfortable using it.

Covenant Eyes (www.covenanteyes.com) Monitor and filter for home use.

- The monitoring version of this software does not provide filtering. We recommend that the filtering/monitoring version of this software be used.
- Is available for iPod Touch/iPad/iPhone and Android (monitoring only) devices.
- Filtering is compatible with Windows and Mac.

FamiSafe (<https://famisafe.wondershare.com>)

- Text and social media monitoring.
- Location tracking.
- Works on all iOS and Android mobile devices.
- Allows you to block websites and has photo detection.

SafeEyes (www.safeeyes.com) Filter for small business.

- Can block peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing programs.
- Available for some mobile devices.
- Can be installed on up to 3 computers with one subscription.
- Compatible with Windows and Mac operating systems.

Circle (www.meetcircle.com) Filter at the router level for home networks.

- This is a purchased product set up at the router level instead of the computer level.
- Will work for multiple computers and devices or home-based wireless network.
- Has many customizable features for all ages and is difficult to circumvent.

Adblock Plus (<https://adblockplus.org/>) Ad blocker for individual browsers at no cost.

- Blocks sidebar and pop-up advertisements that may be inappropriate.
- Needs to be installed as an add-on for each browser.
- Provides a browser option for mobile phones and tablets.

Forcefield (<https://forcefield.me/>) Monitor and control specifically for Apple devices; Android version to follow.

- Extensive features including app sleep, remotely control screen-time limits, track social media photo uploads, and more.
- Recommended by Focus on the Family as a parental tool to monitor children's device usage.

Appendix B:

Cell Phone Agreement

You have shown yourself responsible enough to have a cell phone. As part of the responsibility of having a cell phone you will also be asked to abide by the following rules. The goal is to establish some boundaries to help you manage this new freedom.

1. My parents will always know the passwords on my phone, and they have the right to look at my phone at any time.
2. My parents will manage passwords that allow for downloading apps, internet access, and any other items they feel necessary.
3. I will answer calls from my parents. If I miss their call, I will call them back as soon as I am aware of the missed call.
4. I will be honest about how I am using the phone and any questions my parents have regarding the phone.
5. I will give the phone to one of my parents at ___ pm every school night and every weekend at ___pm. I will get the phone back at ___am.
6. I will not send or receive inappropriate photos, texts, or any other communication.
7. I will not view inappropriate material with the phone.
8. I will tell my parents if I receive inappropriate material/communication.
9. I will not text and drive. If I need to send or view a text, I will pull over to do so.
10. I will be careful not to allow the phone to be a distraction or barrier to interactions with those I am around. Any request to discontinue using the cell phone will be honored.
11. School rules concerning cell phones will be followed.
12. I understand these rules are because my parents love me and want the best for me.

I understand this is not my phone. My parents have the right to take the phone or put additional boundaries in place if these rules are not followed. I am willing to follow the above rules and any other rules my parents feel the need to put in place.

Teen's Signature _____ Date _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C:

Sample Family Technology Plan

(Note: Parents will need to adapt this policy to the ages of their children and needs of the family.)

Purpose of Policy: We desire to live lives consistent with biblical instruction. We understand the internet is a helpful resource, but it can allow access to ungodly material and ungodly interactions with others. Our hope is to develop a plan to use the internet as a resource while protecting each of us from the possible dangers.

Time & Place:

1. All devices that connect to the internet will be turned off by 10pm. Devices that need to be charged overnight will be left in the parent's bedroom to charge. These devices will be given back in the morning once you are ready for the day's activities.
2. There will be 30 minutes every evening where all electronic devices will be set aside. This time can be spent together playing a game, eating supper, reading a book, doing homework, etc.
3. Time after chores and homework are finished is considered "free time." Only one hour of this time can be "screen time". (TV, computer, phone, tablet, etc.)

Appropriate Conduct:

4. You will not post or send hurtful or sexual messages, pictures, or videos.
5. You will not develop an on-line relationship with anyone you have not met in person without discussing with your parents.
6. You will not have social media, email, or other personal accounts your parents do not know about.

Blocking/Filtering/Monitoring:

7. Our family will be using the following software to block/filter/monitor devices. _____

Username, Passwords, Buddy Lists:

8. Parents will have passwords to all personal accounts: email, social media, etc. (This should be reevaluated as your child shows the maturity to appropriately manage these accounts.)

Unacceptable Activities:

9. This section should include specific unacceptable activities such as pornography, gambling, peer-to-peer file sharing, and the illegal downloading of music.

Family Signatures:

Appendix D:

Ongoing Evaluation Plan

Every good plan has a process to evaluate what is working and what needs to be adjusted. The technology plan for your family is no different. In order to have an effective technology plan you will need to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of your plan. In addition, as your children age and mature, your plan will need to adjust and allow them the freedom to manage responsibilities while still being under your authority. The more often you are discussing technology and how to handle current events the more likely your plan will be effective and correspond with your family's needs. Consider scheduling a quarterly meeting to discuss your family's technology plan. Also realize it is often necessary to have further discussions throughout the year as new issues arise relating to technology.

Questions to consider as you evaluate and discuss your technology plan as a family:

Time:

1. How is the family using free time?
2. When does the family spend time together without the presence of technology?
3. What is one thing related to technology you should fast from next week? (This would be something for everyone in the family to consider; i.e. Facebook, Pinterest, a specific game)

Technology Use:

4. How do individuals in the family use technology?
5. What areas would you like additional freedom with technology? (games, tablets, phone, etc.)
6. What are ways technology has had a negative impact on you?
7. What do you enjoy or benefit most from technology?
8. What are new things your peers enjoy doing online? (social media, apps, etc.) What are the benefits or risks of each?

Relationships:

9. What relationships are being strengthened by technology?
10. What relationships are being hindered by technology?
11. What are the dangers of online relationships?

Family Technology Plan:

12. How has the family technology plan been beneficial for you?
13. How would you like to see the family technology plan changed?
14. In what ways have you matured and demonstrated your ability to handle increased freedom[s] with technology?

NOTES:

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