UPSTREET'S

Family Technology Agreement

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Hey Parents,

Have you ever wanted to throw your child's game system into the street or conveniently "lose" it for a few months? If so, you're not alone.

Along with the challenges "smart devices" bring, there are also great benefits and opportunities. Though some days we might like to, raising our kids apart from technology is not a realistic option.

Sometimes, without realizing it, we can send our children mixed messages. One minute we're telling our kids to log off a gaming site and focus on homework. Then, five minutes later, we're calling them over to watch a funny YouTube video we saw while "working."

It's a lot like teaching a teenager to drive a car. We tell them to do things we don't always do ourselves. And like learning to drive a car, learning to use technology responsibly takes time. They'll make mistakes, but those mistakes can be great teaching moments.

This resource isn't designed to tell you all the rules you should have in your home. Instead, let it be a guide for you and your family as you decide the best way to keep everyone safe and on the same page. But before we move into specifics, here are three goals to keep in mind:

Be a great example.

The best thing we can do for our kids is to be the adults we want them to become. *What are some general rules for me as a parent? Where should my phone sleep? Do I have screen-time limits? What are my personal rules for the dinner table or time with my spouse and/or children?*

Do your research.

Before allowing your child to use a device on their own, decide what access they will have to other content, what parental restrictions you can set, and if your child will be able to communicate with anyone. Also, research any new apps your child would like to download. Common Sense Media is a great website which allows you to learn about the content in many apps, as well as books, movies, and video games.

Remember what's most important.

Relationships matter more than technology. If technology in your home is negatively influencing your family members' relationships with one another, it might be time to make some changes.

For other tips, check out our Technology Resources for parents at **northpoint.org/techguide**.

Helping your child learn how to use technology responsibly can be challenging—but so rewarding. You don't have to do it alone. Let's do it together!

— North Point Community Church UpStreet Team

Tips for having a great conversation with your child about technology:

We suggest not giving your child their own device. Instead, let them know you are letting them use a device you own. You purchased it. It belongs to you. And you can take it back whenever you feel you need to.

Right now, you've got all the power. The best bargaining position you'll have is before you allow your child to begin using technology. So, the best time to have a discussion about expectations is before they begin using a device. The second-best time for this discussion is now.

- **Share with your child that technology is a privilege**, but relationships are more important. What matters most is how your child treats you and the other members of your family.

- **Introduce the idea that a device** (gaming system, iPad, Kindle, tablet, computer, etc.) **is powerful**. It's like fire—it can be used for good or bad. Let your child know that you want to help them leverage technology for good.

- **Cast vision for the future**. Help your child understand that this is an opportunity to learn and build trust. If and when they are given more privileges someday (e.g., a smart phone) will be directly related to how well they handle technology responsibly today.

- **Prioritize an ongoing conversation.** Of course it's important to have rules and consequences, but it's even more important to keep the lines of communication open. Make sure your child knows that they won't be punished if they see or hear something inappropriate as long as they tell you right away. If your child sees or hears something they don't understand, encourage them to come to you first.

- **Simulate emergency situations.** It's likely that at some point, despite your best efforts to protect, your child will see or hear something that isn't appropriate. Talk with your child about how to handle it. What should they do? Who should they talk to?

Parent Technology Worksheet

Throughout this Discussion Guide, you will be prompted to share with your child how you have set wise boundaries as an adult. Before those conversations start, take time to think through these questions and discuss them with your spouse or co-parent.

- **Where does our technology** (tablets, phones, gaming devices) **"sleep" at night?** Agree on a place that your technology can be stored for the night. This could be a central place away from the bedrooms where beeps, rings, and the vibrations of phones won't keep you awake.

- **What are the "no technology times" for each member of the family?** Apart from sleep times, there are other times when phones shouldn't distract (meal times, driving, etc.). Give your child permission to remind you, just like you'll be reminding them.

- **Who knows our passwords?** Parents should have access to passwords, apps, and browsing history until their children are adults.

- **Are we set up to win? Is our home network helping or hurting?** Research ways to filter and monitor all devices, including those that belong to friends who are visiting. (*Circle, Bark, and Common Sense are great tools for this purpose!*)

Dear _____,

You are beginning to use technology more and more. That's a big responsibility and privilege and a huge step toward becoming a grown-up. **As your parents, we are so excited for you.** But we also want to be sure that we all use technology wisely. Technology is a powerful tool. It can do a lot of good but can also be very harmful to you, your friends, and our family. That's why it's important for us to agree on how we are going to use technology responsibly.

As we consider apps and games, we'll use the words "now" and "later." There will be lots of things that are available to you now. But there will also be things that we decide are for later. This just means you will have to show responsibility and good judgement in some of the "now" things in order to be able to do some of the "later" things.

We've worked out some rules for technology. These are true whether you have a tablet, a computer, a game system, or any other device. These rules apply to everyone in our home.

We also want to be sure we're all on the same page. All the devices in our home belong to us, as your parents. Whether or not you will be able to use them and how often will be based on trust. When you follow the guidelines we set out, you are building trust. That trust leads to more freedom.

As your parents, we love you so much, and we are so proud of you. We know you've got what it takes to do this well.

Love,

_____

Family Technology Agreement

Congratulations! We know using technology is a big deal and that it's important to you. We think you're ready for this next big step! We've talked with you about how it can be used for good, but it can also be harmful to you and to others. We want to keep you safe, so let's agree on some guidelines for how and when technology will be used in our home.

Please read and initial each item below to let us know you agree. We will initial each item too.

_____ _____ I understand that how I treat my family and others is more important than screen time.

_____ _____ I will choose to honor any person who is in front of me by putting my device away and giving them my full attention when they are talking.

_____ _____ I understand that I am only allowed to use technology in common rooms of our home (living room, kitchen, etc.) where others can see what I'm doing. I will not use technology in my bedroom.

_____ _____ I understand that to keep me safe, there will be filters in place to limit my access to the internet.

_____ _____ If I see or hear something inappropriate, I will tell my parents. I will never get in trouble for something sent to me as long as I tell an adult.

_____ _____ If I feel worried, scared, confused, or unsure about anything, I will talk to my parents about it.

_____ _____ I understand that my parents must approve any new games, apps, or websites I visit, whether I'm at home or at someone else's house.

_____ _____ I will honor others when playing games with friends online. I will treat others the way I want to be treated.

_____ _____ I understand that I am allowed _____ (fill in amount of time per day) for games and/or device time. I will set a timer to make sure I stop when my time is up.

_____ _____ I will not create accounts or share any private information, such as my name, birthday, address, phone number, or any photos of myself or my family.

_____ _____ I will not communicate with anyone online that I don't know in real life.

_____ _____ I understand that my parents will research the games, apps, and websites I'm interested in so we can have a conversation about whether or not they are appropriate for me.

In addition...*(This is a space for parents to add anything that applies specifically to their homes.)*

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_____

_____

_____   _____   _____
Child Signature   Parent Signature   Date