

Help Your Child Use Technology & Media Sensibly

- Experts agree that one of the key contributions a parent can make to safe and wise technology & media use at home is to move the computer and television your child uses to a non-private location. A room or area where family members normally congregate or frequently walk by is ideal.
- The internet is part of everyday life for most MPH students. As a social networking tool, Instant Messaging and sites like MySpace and Facebook offer teens (and increasingly pre-teens) a way to “hang out” amongst friends even when they are physically separated. Children value their independence and their privacy and you can help your kids understand that, as they hang out online, there is **no real privacy on the World Wide Web**. Remind your child that despite marking communication “private” or “password protected,” there is no guarantee it will remain so.
- Discuss and set rules about how often, where, and what type of technology use your family allows. (e.g. Do you allow your child to play M (mature) rated video games at home? At a friend’s house?)
- Limit the amount of “screen time” allowed per day, including cell phone use. The national association of pediatricians recommends 1-2 hours per day of “quality media programming.” Some studies show that, as much as they embrace and use technology, teens especially have a hard time disconnecting from it, and sometimes view it as a burden.
- Ask your child to show you how to use IM or to show you their own, a friend’s or favorite music group’s MySpace page.
- Familiarize yourself with Facebook.com. It has become an essential networking tool for college and high school students.
- Occasionally visit MySpace.com and type in your child’s name or email address to see what communication, photos and “friends” are connected to their account. Consider doing this with your child.
- Occasionally enter your child’s name and city into Google. Investigating a person’s “web presence” is an increasingly common tactic of potential employers and some college admissions officers as they attempt to distinguish among candidates.
- Visit YouTube.com and type in your child’s name or school to see what kind of material has been posted.

Note: Even when you must register for an account to use them, membership is free on all the sites mentioned above and the only TRUE information required is an email address.

Additional Resources

“Identity Production in a Networked Culture: Why Youth Heart MySpace.” Danah Boyd. The American Association for the Advancement of Science. 2006.

This article looks at why teenagers love online communities and how they use them.

“A One-Eyed Invader in the Bedroom.” Tara Parker-Pope. The New York Times. 2008.

Discusses a growing body of research showing strong associations between TV in children’s bedrooms and numerous health and educational problems.

http://www.wiredkids.org/wiredkids_org.html

This online organization is run by a lawyer and it uses information from law enforcement to assist parents and educators as they attempt to teach kids internet safety.

Place your cursor on the TWEENS section bar and then TWEENS ONLINE SAFETY and click on Instant Messaging for great directions on how to help keep your child’s IMing as safe and private as possible.

<http://www.facebook.com/safety/>

Did you know children under 13 are not allowed on Facebook? If you’d like to help your child understand how to use Facebook wisely, read tips and other helpful information here.

<http://www.pewinternet.org/Presentations/2008/Online-child-safety-and-literacy.aspx>

The Pew Foundation has a great website with links to the most recent data on children and teens and technology use. This link includes a slide show with the latest statistics.

Some online resources to check out:

- www.Netsmartz.org
- www.SafeTeens.com
- www.WebWiseKids.org
- <http://www.common sense media.org/advice-for-parents#>
- www.WiredSafety.org



- www.GetNetWise.org

To discuss information in this handout or for additional resources, please contact MPH librarian, Liza Morrison at 446-2452 extension 114