## Tips for Setting Family Tech Agreements

###### Using this agreement

* Edit pages 3-5 if needed, and then print to discuss with your child or teen.
* Further considerations are listed on page 6. Prior to starting the conversation, we also recommend working through the related module content found at <https://parents.culturereframed.org/tech-guide>

###### Ask each family member to think about these before the meeting

* What are the short- and long-term desired outcomes for parents or caregivers and the child or teen? (e.g., safety, harmony, success in life, education, positive social relationships, etc.)

###### Positive statements & positive reinforcement

* Try whenever possible to use positive rather than negative language when discussing agreements and commitments. For example, use “I will” rather than “I will not.”
* Try to offer positive reinforcement for sticking with agreements rather than implementing negative consequences for failure to comply (though there may be times when consequences are necessary).

###### Safety first

* Remember that teens’ brains are still developing, and they may make mistakes or break the commitments you’ve agreed to. Be sure to frame this agreement as an issue of safety, not about trust – it is important that they know that you are concerned about their safety and wellbeing, and that even when they make mistakes, you will be there to help them work things out.

###### Set conditions for the meeting

* Think about when, where, and how long. The evening may not be a great time as their frontal lobes are less active and so they may be more prone to having an emotional reaction. Choose a shared area if possible, such as the kitchen. Set an agreed-upon time, and keep it relatively short – we recommend blocking off 30 minutes.

###### Agenda

List what will be discussed. Here are some examples:

1. Where and when devices can be used.
2. Agreed-upon time limits for things such as homework, social/fun time, when to turn off devices, bedtimes, etc.
3. Allowable apps/games and platforms.
4. Passwords for devices and social media accounts to be shared with parents (recommended until at least mid-teens). In your discussions it is important to explain to teens why this is important. Tech use check-ins.
5. Discuss what apps will be used for monitoring or managing devices, and online privacy settings.
6. Responsible posting. THINK is a helpful acronym: Is it True? Helpful? Inspiring? Necessary? Kind?
7. Expected responsible behavior, such as reporting problematic content or behavior.
8. Safe followers and online friends (no strangers).
9. Tech-free hobbies or physical activities (e.g., 30-day challenges, yoga, walks, art, sport).
10. Tech-free family time.
11. Responsibility for the safety of devices.
12. Tech controls and management apps (see Enrichment 3, Section 2).
13. Weekly reports for devices and online activities.
14. Restrictions or consequences if agreements are not adhered to. (Avoid total bans, and start small. Write them down, and have a mechanism in place so that the child can earn back a privilege.)

###### Meeting Guidelines

* Agree that each person has a say, without interruptions. Additionally, encourage using “I” statements rather than “you”.
* Agree that everyone stay calm and respectful. It is safe to disagree.
* Agree that if the meeting does not go well, you will meet on another day.
* Understand that the agreements can be renegotiated if they don’t seem fair or don’t work. Provide an opportunity to regroup every couple of months to give feedback: parent to child and child to parent.
* The agreements should change over time to align with their age and stage of development.
* Parent(s) or caregiver(s) do get the final say.

## Tech Use Agreement

Between \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Where can devices be used?

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Allowable apps/games and platforms

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Passwords for devices and social media accounts shared with parents: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Notes on Tech Use Check-in/Parent Supervision: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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###### Check when discussed and/or make notes of agreed-upon use:

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| --- | --- |
| I will maintain privacy settings & expectations on safe sharing. |  |
| I will THINK before posting. Is it TRUE, HELPFUL, INSPIRING, NECESSARY, KIND? |  |
| I will use my tech with respect for myself and others. |  |
| I will ask permission before sharing or taking pics.* My parents/caregivers agree to check before commenting on my posts or sharing pictures with me in them on their social media accounts.
 |  |
| I agree to behave responsibly with personal privacy online and will be honest about my accounts and device usage. |  |
| I agree to post responsibly and will keep my digital reputation in mind. |  |
| I will only allow friends/followers who are REAL friends and only respond to messages and calls from people I know. (This should not include friends of friends.) |  |
| I will report strangers or harassers to parents/caregivers. I will block that person from my account. |  |
| I will take care of my devices to prevent loss or breakage. |  |
| I will tell my parents/caregivers about upsetting content or incidents online:* For example, if I have been told not to tell anyone about a new friend, or if I have shared something I shouldn’t have.
* Also, I will ask for help with mean or bullying behavior, if I am uncomfortable with any communication, or if someone is trying to find out about my personal information (e.g., where I live, go to school, personal relationships).
* If I have concerns for a friend’s safety. (e.g., a friend posting self-harm images or expressing thoughts of suicide).
 |  |
| I understand that no one has a right to ask me for naked pictures. * If this happens, I will not be in trouble; I will tell a trusted adult—the person asking needs to be stopped as it’s dangerous and illegal.
 |  |
| We all agree to stay calm if something goes wrong.Parents agree to be available to help and reinforce that the child will not be ‘in trouble’ if they have made a poor decision or mistake, even if they have been warned in advance. |  |

Ideas for tech-free hobbies or physical activities: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Ideas for tech-free family time:

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Restrictions or consequences if agreements are not kept.

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###### Digital Timetable

E.g., Mon-Fri Homework 1hr 45m - Social/Creative 1hr (set times start/finish)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mon-Fri Times: |  |
| Saturday Times: |  |
| Sunday Times: |  |
| Holiday Times: |  |
| Time Limit on Social Networks: |  |
| The central location to keep devices overnight is: |  |

###### Young Person Agrees to:

I understand that if I maintain these agreements I will benefit from a more balanced and positive experience on my digital device.

This will help me as I get older and learn to take more responsibility for my own online wellbeing.

If I don’t maintain these agreements, I understand that there will be some fair consequences. I am open to renegotiating these agreements as circumstances change.

Parent Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Young Person Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

###### Further Considerations

* It may be helpful to discuss how much the device costs per month and who is paying for this, or what chores may be expected as a form of contribution. Clarify how much data is available.
* Ensure your teen knows why parental controls or monitoring apps are being used including what they are and why they are being used.
	+ Be clear about the alerts the monitoring app will send if your teen tries to disable it or tries to circumvent the settings.
	+ Also ensure that your teen can ask for exceptions to any settings, but the parent does have the final say.
	+ Be clear and transparent about what parents have access to and can see.
	+ Be aware that if you are using message monitoring you may see other children’s interactions and you don’t really have a right to monitor other children’s posts. If you have any concerns about another child, discuss them with your teen.
* Prior to saying yes to any requested apps, be sure to have fully investigated what these apps involve and consider the safety for the age of the child. [Check Common Sense Media](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/app-reviews) for their app and game reviews and be aware that the age “13” relates to data-collection parameters. It does not refer to the safety or content of an app. When discussing sexting, emphasize that it is never safe to share a naked or sexualized photo or video, even if they look anonymous (from the neck down). Focus on the peer fallout in addition to the legal implications—young people tend to be more concerned about peer reactions.