

Safety Guidelines for Technology Use - Children and Youth

General Suggestions For Various Stages of Development

Stage – Ages

Developmental Considerations

Stage One: 4th – 6th Grade Keep It Simple Stage	At this stage, we encourage parents to keep access to technology simple. Consider joining the Wait Until 8th Campaign https://www.waituntil8th.org/ For families who decide their child needs a device before 8th grade, Keep It Simple. Include: simple phone devices that only allow calling and texting; they don't download apps, and do not allow sharing of pictures or videos. Example: Gizmo watches or Gabb phones Rationale: A watch is a smartphone alternative for those who want their kids to Wait Until 8th (or even longer). They let you talk, message, and track your child's location without giving them full access to the internet, social media, games, and everything else a regular smartphone offers. <u>They're designed primarily for kids between the ages of about 8 and 13</u>, a time when many kids begin going out into the world on their own for the first time. They're not as easily lost as a phone, and many also come with apps and alarms that remind (and encourage) kids to do chores or finish tasks. Exclude: Smart Phones, Internet Connected Tablets, All Social Media
Stage Two: 7th – 9th Grade Slow Foundations Stage Encourage a slow, age-appropriate introduction to escalating technology use.	At this stage, we encourage slow, step-by-step adoption of technology. Introducing tech too quickly can easily overwhelm kids. Encourage kids not to use riskier social media apps because of the vulnerability of middle school development. When your family is ready to allow social media, we suggest you consider introducing the apps one at a time, with enough time between apps to allow your child to get used to each one. Talk with them about their social media experiences. Open dialogue is key to helping your children feel safe sharing their fears and difficulties with you.

Stage Two Continued Slow Foundations	A good approach is to make this a family effort. As each app downloaded is used responsibly and maturely, the child can earn more technology privileges in the future. This approach gives your child an incentive to use social media wisely and also provides protection to help them grow in their understanding of both the app, and their own response to the arena of social media. Include: Be Real – Limits photo sharing to one per day – should not be given before 7th grade – Caution! This app includes the opportunity for kids to view mature and inappropriate content. Smart Phones – 8th Grade and Above Internet Browsers with the strictest parental controls YouTube Kids – <u>until 9th grade</u> depending on the maturity of your child, then cautiously add regular YouTube. Instagram – <u>Not before 9th Grade</u> – 10th Grade may be better Exclude: Snapchat, TickTok, Discord, X
Stage Three: 10th – 12th Grade Preparing for Independence with Parental Guidance	This stage is a great time to incrementally prepare your kids for independent technology use by the time they finish high school. How much technology is given and how much oversight is exerted, will depend on your child’s maturity level and your own discernment with God’s guidance.

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