

How to adopt healthy habits with electronics

By Marie Potter



If you've noticed an odd quietness about the house or your latest Internet or mobile bill skyrocket, it can be a sign that the electronic usage has crept out of control. This is often the case after the holidays, March Break or summer vacation. Kids left to their own devices and unmonitored can lead to unhealthy habits. Here are some tips that Professional Organizers in Canada use to help expand the talking, doing and imagining and reduce the surfing, gaming and messaging.

You need a media plan

Create a Media Plan such as the one below, and keep it posted near your electronic charging stations.

If you want to build out a specific plan for each individual in your household create a family media plan. Thanks to the American Academy of Pediatrics, you can create a custom plan and use a handy media calculator to see how prioritizing activities can affect screen time.

Part of developing healthy life habits includes keeping the sedentary activity in check. The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology launched the first ever 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth (5-17 years) in 2016. It gives you a great visual to share with kids to help educate them on the amount of time they need to spend on sweat, step, sleep and sit - keep it posted next to your Media Plan.

Top 10 Yes Media Plan

1. Yes to homework and chores before electronics
2. Yes to time limits on electronics by category (TV, music, games, computer/ipad)
3. Yes to educational apps and programs
4. Yes to keeping connected to family far away
5. Yes to charging your device daily
6. Yes to treating electronics with respect
7. Yes to keeping personal information private
8. Yes to asking kids if it's okay to post pictures of them on social media
9. Yes to posting vacation photos after the vacation
10. Yes to downloading or purchasing online with parent approval

Top 10 No Media Plan

1. No electronics 30 minutes before bed or when waking up
2. No electronics at meals
3. No electronics on play dates
4. No electronics in the bedroom
5. No cyberbullying or sexting
6. No sharing personal information with strangers
7. No posting photos that could embarrass themselves or friends
8. No accepting friend requests unless you know the requester very well

9. No entering online contests and free giveaways
10. No gossiping

Ease the transition period between on and off times for electronics

Children experience electronic withdrawals when coming off devices. They might get agitated or let you know just exactly how boring life can be without electronics. This can happen if they are pulled off electronics quickly. A predetermined media schedule usually eliminates this. However, if and when it does happen, talk with your kids about it so they are aware and responsible for changing the transitioning behaviour. It's also very helpful to have a transition activity planned. Consider reading "How to Unplug your child" for 101 ways to help your kids turn off gadgets and enjoy real life by Liat Hughes Joshi.

Implement consequences

Electronics are a privilege. Given the highly addictive nature of electronics there's nothing quite like the effect of an e-tox to turn poor behaviour around. A week's ban off electronic does wonders for relationships, creativity and appreciating online time. After a serious ban, the threat of another ban is often all it takes to correct behaviour.

Be a positive role model

Lastly you must walk the talk. Be a positive role model by practicing healthy media habits. If you are online and your child comes to talk with you, stop and give them the eye contact and focus they deserve. Life is short and a weekend can easily be blown away online. Lead the way... unplug, set and stick to media free times for family time.

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