



Media Management Kit

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PART 1

Plan Your Family's Media Habits by Establishing a Media Management Plan



Now some of us are planners. We like to download and print out planners and templates. Some of us are more carefree and like to go more with the ebb and flow. Whether you're a fastidious planner, or more of a play-it-by-ear kind of person, it's imperative that you give some thought to how your child manages technology. You can determine if you want to formally document the plan, or at least have had discussion about how technology will be used.

It's a modern parent's imperative to teach their child healthy media habits. Just like we teach them healthy food habits, manners and a host of other "life" skills, so too must we teach them about healthy technology habits.

If we don't teach children how to use technology in healthy and helpful ways, technology can very quickly manage them. Far too often I work with parents who are pulling their hair out because they cannot get their child to switch off technology, or they constantly request to use gadgets. They want to use technology all the time.

And this isn't healthy for their development.

It's essential in a digital age that we show children how to make informed and empowered decisions about how they use technology. And it's important that this goes beyond simply focusing on "how much" screen-time they have each day.

So what does a Media Management Plan look like?

It can be a formal, written document if you like to formalise things. It can also be a simple conversation between parents and children. The important thing is that it is discussed and formalised and not just an airy-fairy "thing" that's never discussed. It can't be the elephant in the room.

HOW MUCH time do you want your child to have with technology each day or week?

This is the first question you need to address and I'm also going to [controversially] say that it's probably the least important question. Quality trumps quantity when it comes to screens. This isn't to suggest that we don't need to consider how much time kids are spending with devices. We certainly need to factor this in and monitor this. But we shouldn't focus solely on this aspect. If you want to know what the guidelines suggest in terms of screen-time, [click here](#). Ideally, I suggest you find an amount of time that works best for your child. All children are different. For some children, a little bit of technology time goes a long way. For other children, they can cope with more technology time. The trick is knowing what works for your child.

WHEN can your child use technology?

We know that certain times of the day are often better to avoid certain types of technology with children.



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For example, we know that frenetic, fast-paced TV is not ideal before school as it sets the brain up for rapid-fire input. We also know that the 90-minute window before sleep time is best to be screen-free to ensure healthy sleeping patterns.

WHERE can your child use technology?

Specify tech-free zones in your house. Where are the “no-go tech-zones” in your house? It’s important that children have specific places where devices are not used. Their brains and bodies need calm, uninterrupted time away from devices that ping, ring and buzz. Generally, I recommend that the dining table, bedrooms, playrooms and bathrooms are tech-free zones in family homes.

It’s really important, given the increase in mobile devices, that children are encouraged to use technology in publically accessible places in the house. So as part of your media plan specify exactly where your child can use technology.

WHAT technology can your child use?

This is probably the most important area to focus on. Content is KING! What they’re doing when using screens is vital to consider.

Children respond well to parameters. So have open conversations about exactly what apps, websites, video games and TV programs your child can watch/use.

Children often get into strife when there are ambiguous or no guidelines about what they can do in regards to technology. And so it’s natural for them to explore.

Be very explicit. For example, you could create a folder on your tablet with the apps that are suitable for your child or children to use. You can create You Tube playlists of appropriate content. You can pre-record TV shows or specify channels that you’re happy for your child to watch.

WITH WHOM can your child use technology?

Even though young children aren’t necessarily on Facebook or Instagram, there are increasing numbers of social media apps, games and websites dedicated to children. For example, Minecraft enables multi-player options and Club Penguin offers chat facilities. So it’s critical that parents specify and know exactly whom their child is speaking to and playing with online.

This is a particularly important consideration if you have multiple children. We have to be careful what second-hand media young children are consuming if they have an older brother/sister. Be specific about what TV shows, games or websites can be used when younger siblings are around. Perhaps you’re happy for your child to watch a particular show or play a video game if it’s with an adult. Remember, just be specific.



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HOW can your child use technology?

Set rules and habits to establish healthy use of screens. In particular, consider their vision (implement the 20-20-20 rule), posture (basically, bring the device to their eye level), hearing (encourage ear-muff headphones as opposed to ear-bud headphones, limit headphone use to no more than 60 minutes/day and set maximum volume levels in settings) and limit their exposure to WiFi (essential strategies include no apps in laps rule and using airplane mode unless WiFi is required).



PART 2

Media Management Plan



This is a media management plan for _____
[insert child's name]

I can play _____ on these days and for these amounts of time.
[insert names of technology here]

[Tick the specific days your child can use technology and state the amount of time next to each day. List the specific amount of time, in minutes or hours, that you'd like your child to use technology each "session" or a cumulative total for the day.]

<input type="checkbox"/>	MONDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	TUESDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	WEDNESDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	THURSDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FRIDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	SATURDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	SUNDAY	<input type="text"/>

I can use these devices:

<input type="checkbox"/>	MONDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	TUESDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	WEDNESDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	THURSDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	FRIDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	SATURDAY	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	SUNDAY	<input type="text"/>



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I can use technology _____
[List specific times of the day and conditions for when you're happy for your child to use devices. For example, is it after school when their homework is completed? Would you prefer that they avoid playing fast-paced games or apps in the 90 minutes before bed, or perhaps before school? These need to be very explicit about the non-negotiable times.]

I can use technology in _____
[List specific places where you want your child using technology. For example, is the bedroom a no-go tech zone?]

I can use technology with _____
[List specific people with whom children can use technology]

I agree to the following conditions:

I'll turn off technology when _____
[State your agreed conditions. Will it be after an elapsed period of time, eg. After 45 minutes? Will it be after they've finished a certain number of episodes? After mum has given me two warnings that my time is almost up?]

I understand that some days I won't be able to use technology because of other commitments. I can/cannot accrue media time that I haven't used throughout the week
[Delete the word that's not relevant. Remember, you know your child best.]

I need to take regular breaks from using technology to help my body and brain function properly. I'll do this at least every _____ minutes, or when Mum/Dad suggests I do this. These are some of the things I can do to have a break _____ [List various ideas for off-screen, physical activities, such as stand up and stretch, do some star jumps, run around outside for _____ minutes].

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

Child's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____

