

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE NAVIGATE TECHNOLOGY AND THE ONLINE WORLD



As parents, guardians & adults in a position to care for children and young people, it's important that we consider the need to keep them safe on, and also help build a healthy relationship with technology & the online world. We need to ensure the importance of **boundaries**, encourage healthy **habits**, and take care to **communicate** the expectations and decisions we are putting in place for their safety and mental health.

In this short document you'll find some simple recommendations for keeping young people safe, helping them develop a positive relationship with the internet.

BOUNDARIES

Recognise there will be times when we need to protect young people by putting boundaries in place to prevent them accessing inappropriate material.

-  Ensure that **you** as a parent/guardian are the only one who holds the Wifi password. With this you can ensure both which devices and who has access to the internet under your own roof.
-  Decide when and where your young people will have access to the internet. Are there rooms where they cannot take their devices? (e.g. Can they have their phone in their bedrooms overnight?)
-  If possible, run young people's accounts through your own devices. You can organise it so they are only able to download applications after you have given approval for them to do so.
-  Educate yourself on the technology and apps your young people will be using. Use these websites, or Google for more information yourself.
internetmatters.org
net-aware.org.uk
-  Decide if you want to use blocking software (some paid, some free) to limit the material young people are able to access. For more information on these, look up the webwise.ie article on filtering software.
-  As far as you are able, operate an open device policy for tech & accounts in your family. You wouldn't allow a child access to a room in your house where they could see whoever they want & do whatever they want without your supervision, so why give them this freedom with a computer?

HABITS

We also want to prepare young people for life outside of our influence, equipping them with habits to make wise decisions.

- Consider your own relationship with technology and the internet. What habits might you be passing on to your young people by example?
- Encourage healthy habits both on and offline, working toward moderation in online patterns and habits.
- Raise the awareness of their habits around screens before bed, and the importance of good sleep.
- Talk to them about the habits they get into around technology. Help them to notice times when they intentionally use the internet, and when they are just picking it up out of habit.

COMMUNICATION

It's important these boundaries & habits are communicated and discussed openly & often to ensure understanding & express reasoning.

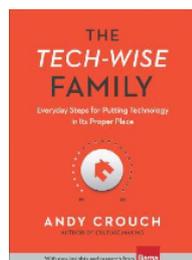
- Choose your time to have these conversations with young people carefully. Ideally not when you're frustrated after a long stretch of time they have spent online!
- Use the family media plan template found at:

[healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

This can help begin and shape these discussions. Print off and display the plan you complete and agree on a time to return to it and check in to see how the decisions you have made are working in your family.

RECOMMENDED READING

**RAISING HUMANS IN A
DIGITAL WORLD - DIANA GRABER**



**THE TECH WISE FAMILY
- ANDY CROUCH**

ADDITIONAL HELPFUL WEBSITES

[earlychildhoodireland.ie](https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie)
[cybersafeireland.org](https://www.cybersafeireland.org)
[esafety.ie](https://www.esafety.ie)
[zeeko.ie](https://www.zeeko.ie)

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