

# How do I keep my kid safe online?

## INTERNET FILTERS AND DEVICE MONITORING AS “DIGITAL SEATBELTS”

The internet can be like the classic game Nintendo Mario Kart — turtle shells and banana peels flying unexpectedly into view from every direction. Some of these hazards are harmless, yet others can lead to Game Over. While we’d like to think that these dangers live in the hard-to-reach corners of the Internet, the reality is they’re only a few clicks away. When you increase your child’s freedom on a device, you also increase the risk of predators, bullies, porn bots and posers having access to your child.

So, what’s a parent to do?

Similar to how we prepare our kids for hazards in the physical world (e.g., requiring helmets when biking, etc.), we can put safety measures in place in the digital world.

**Filters and monitors** act as online seatbelts offering as much protection as possible from inappropriate content and harmful situations. While it does take a little time and attention to install these safety layers, you’ll sleep better knowing they are in place.



Scan here for more information

### Sample “Seatbelts”



#### INTERNET FILTER

A software or technology that restricts access to certain websites when your child is on your family’s Wi-Fi.

*Examples: Cleanbrowsing DNS, Gryphon, Circle*



#### DEVICE MONITOR

Scans social media, text feeds and more, alerting you when there is harmful content.

*Examples: Bark and Canopy*



#### POKER FACE

The “I’m not shocked” face you give after your kid shares — or you uncover — an awkward or shocking situation online. Even with safety nets in place, accidents will happen. Make sure your child knows there is nothing they could ever do or see on the internet that would change the way you love them.

# Kids & screens: Where do I even begin?

## STARTING POINTS FOR DIGITAL HEALTH

Raising kids is not an easy task. Throw screens into the mix, and it can feel even more overwhelming. If you're nodding your head as you read this, you are not alone. We are the first generation of caregivers to raise digital natives — kids who've never known a world without the internet or smartphone — which means we can't follow a course set by generations before us. So, what are parents to do?

### STEP 1

**Give yourself grace.** The fact you are reading this is a testament to the care and love you have for your child.

### STEP 2

**Start small.** At the right are five principles for digital health that can help your family maximize the benefits of technology, while minimizing the side effects. Consider this list as a menu of options and choose one letter from START that you'd like to try first.



We know that might feel like a lot but, yet, not enough. Explore these STARTing points more by watching the Screen Sanity on-demand webinar. Use code **KIDHEALTH** to access for free!



### Start With Yourself

Model healthy digital habits for your kids. An honest look at our own digital habits is a first step toward building empathy and trust.



### Tables & Bedtimes

Just like our devices, we need to recharge. Develop habits of unplugging and recharging by setting consistent, predictable device-free zones. There are lots of ways to do this, but if you are looking for a couple of places to start, we suggest tables and bedtimes.



### Accountability

The online world is filled with harmful content that can lead to risky situations. And while there are no internet filtering solutions that are 100% foolproof, putting some measures in place can help you feel better. Think of them like a seatbelt — offering as much protection as possible from accidents in the online world.



### Ride. Practice. Drive.

When you teach your kids to drive, you don't simply hand them the keys and wish them good luck. You prepare them to navigate risky situations and road hazards through driver's ed. Take this same approach in the digital world.



### Time Well Spent

The digital world wants you to keep scrolling, but at the end of your life, all you have is your time and attention. Choose screentime that helps you create and connect rather than consume.

# When should I get my kid a phone?

A DRIVER'S ED APPROACH TO DEVICES

**Cars and phones are more alike than you may think.** They are shiny, powerful devices that can take us to amazing places we'd never be able to go to on our own. But they can also get us into accidents. The accidents in the online world range from "fender benders" (like a child realizing via social media that they weren't invited to a birthday party) to a "car being totaled" (pornography, sextortion, self-harm and more).

When you teach your kids to drive, you don't simply hand them the keys and wish them good luck. You prepare them to navigate risky situations and road hazards through driver's ed. Although there isn't a minimum age like 16 to step behind the screen, you can still take a similar "driver's education" approach in the digital world.

## Coach From the Passenger Seat

With devices and apps, start with strong limits and release them slowly.

When it's time for something new, coach your kid from the passenger seat.

When they master one skill, give them something more complex to try.

Celebrate the moments your child shows responsibility, trustworthiness & maturity!

## Smartphone Roadmap

There is a growing market of smartphone alternatives that allow your child to not only stay connected but experience independence and responsibility with less risk. Thanks to smartwatches and basic phones, your kid can practice in the digital equivalent of a parking lot and side streets before they hit the highway.



### SMARTWATCHES

- Texting and calling to a limited list of contacts
- Some feature GPS tracking, video calls and music
- No internet or social media



### BASIC PHONES

- Often look like smartphones
- Texting, calling & "kid-friendly" apps
- Most feature music and a camera
- No or limited internet
- No social media



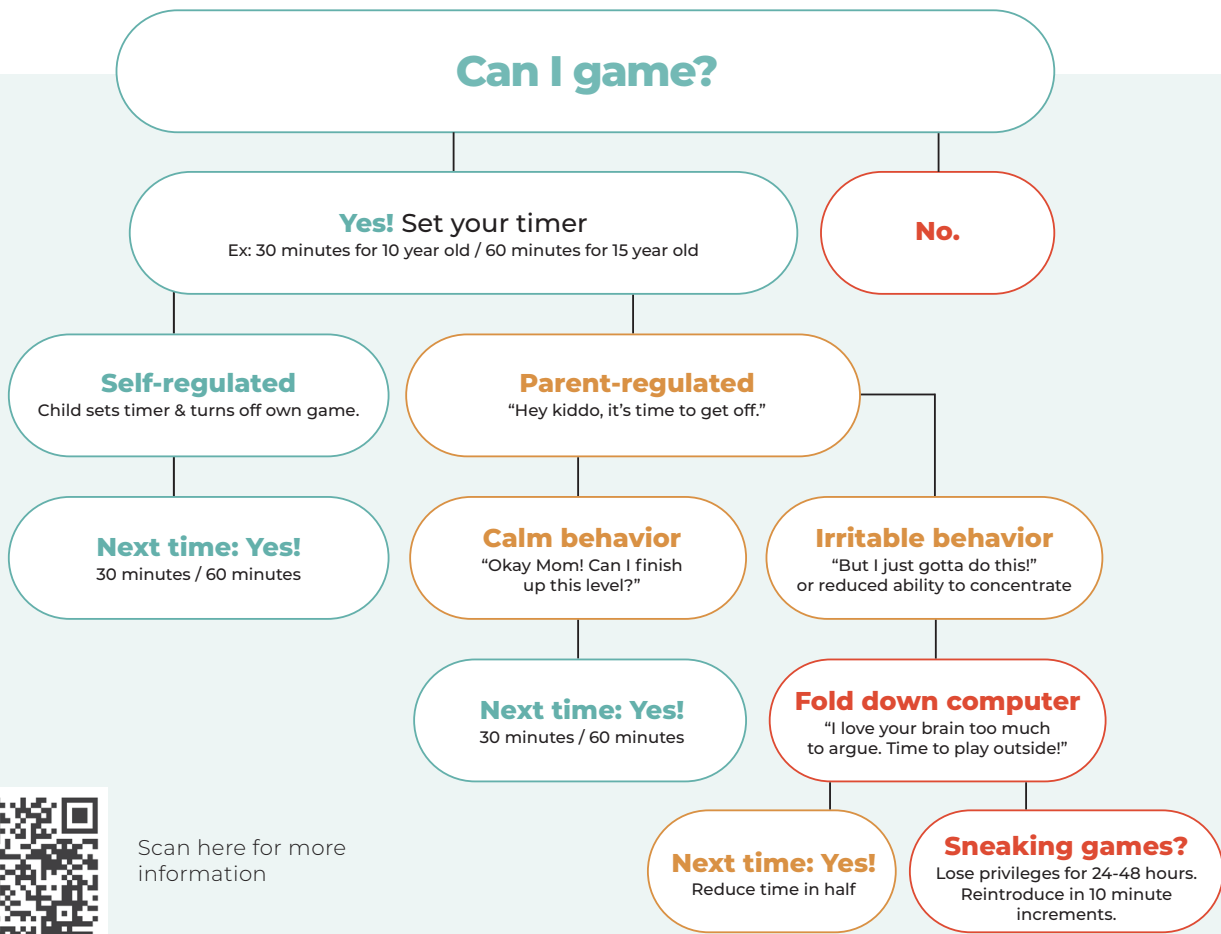
Scan here for more information

# Can I game?

## A GUIDE FOR SETTING BOUNDARIES AND AVOIDING VIDEO GAME MELTDOWNS

A common parenting question is **“How much gaming is too much?”** The magic number of minutes is going to vary from family to family; it can also be affected by the screen size, the game’s intensity, your child’s age and any special needs your kid may have. But one guiding principle is to observe if your child is able to transition off a game calmly and go about their day. If yes, you’ve likely found an appropriate time limit. But anytime they respond with behavior change — irritability, decreased concentration, meltdowns — that’s a good sign their brain is overloaded and next time you need to reduce the time.

Use the **Video Game Decision Tree** below to get your family on the same page about time limits. Consider sharing it with your kid and hanging it near the gaming station as a reminder of what you are striving for.



Scan here for more information

Kansas City-based Screen Sanity is an international nonprofit that equips parents to be mentors and guides so kids grow up happy and healthy in an increasingly digital world.

# Happy Routines, Healthy Screens

SMALL HABITS TODAY, BUILD CALM TOMORROW

Just like we create routines for meals and bedtime, it helps to set simple, predictable patterns for screentime too. Too much screen use can crowd out time for play, movement, exploration, and real-life social interactions. Yet, in a world surrounded by devices, we also know total avoidance isn't realistic.

Screens can trigger meltdowns—yet sometimes seem like the easiest way to stop them—but relying on screens to calm a child can prevent them from developing important coping and emotional regulation skills.

Establishing healthy screen habits takes effort, especially at first. But with patience and consistency, routines eventually bring fewer struggles in the long run. Perfection isn't the goal—steady patterns that fit your family are.

Quantity of screen time matters, but quality matters just as much. Not all screen time is equal, so here are some quick tips for healthier viewing.

#### Look for shows that:

- Encourage active participation
- Avoid flashy and attention-grabbing programming
- Provide slower educational content

#### When possible while using screens:

- Communal screens > individual devices
- Coviev together
- Avoid headphones (so you can hear what they are watching)
- Cross check media with free resources like Common Sense Media for reviews and ratings

## Tips for Building Healthy Digital Habits Early



### Set clear screen time limits

Set time limits and consistent routines for when screens are allowed and when they stay off. For children under 2, limit use to occasional video chats with family and friends.



### Narrate what you're doing

Kids see us on screens all the time, so it can look like we're just staring at our phone. Narrate what you're doing ("I'm paying a bill," "I'm texting Grandma") so they learn screens are tools for connection and getting things done.



### Prepare for waiting

Pack a small "activity bag" with a simple game or toy to use while waiting at the pediatrician or for food at a restaurant (audio players like Yoto's or Tonieboxes are great screen free options).



### Give your child a warning

When screen time is coming to an end, give your child a warning ("This show will be over in 5 minutes and it will be time to play outside.") Physical touch can also help them disengage from the show.

# Where can I find some Screen Sanity?

TOOLS TO GUIDE KIDS THROUGH THEIR DIGITAL CHILDHOOD

Kansas City-based Screen Sanity is an international nonprofit that equips parents to be mentors and guides so kids grow up happy and healthy in an increasingly digital world.

Scan the QR codes below to purchase or download some of Screen Sanity's top parent resources.



### Screen Sanity Group Study

An interactive discussion tool for parents of digital natives



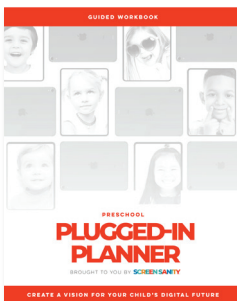
### Social Media Playbook

A guide to setting intentions about social media use



### Smarter Start Toolkit

A parent-child workbook for introducing their first phone



### Plugged-in Planner Series

A series of parent workbooks for each stage of digital childhood



### Parent Night Kit

Tools to host a Screen Sanity training for your community

