

SETTING LIMITS ON THE USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES



POSITIVE PARENTING MANUAL

SETTING LIMITS ON THE USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES

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In this manual, the term “mother/father/parent” is used for convenience. It applies to all those with a caring role, including grandparents and extended family members, foster carers, etc.

Acknowledgements

This publication is adapted from the original work of Ms. H.P.C Wasantha Pathirana MSc. (University of Kelaniya) M.A. (University of Kelaniya) B.A. (Special) University of Colombo, and we thank her for her contribution.

Positive Parenting manual booklets

1. Talking Back
2. Fighting with Siblings
3. Neglecting Schoolwork
4. Household Chores and Responsibilities
5. Returning Home Late
6. Setting Limits on the Use of Digital Devices
7. Fussy Eaters
8. Throwing Tantrums
9. Relationships
10. Staying Awake Past Bedtime
11. Substance Abuse
12. Gender

The icons in this book depicts the following to its readers



Think a Minute



Point To Remember



Important Lesson



Practical Advice



Question



Write Your Thoughts

INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE PARENTING

What is Positive Parenting?

Positive Parenting is not restricted to a method, a set of rules, or a style; it is a belief, a way of living. Children should be treated with respect, free from fear of violence and shame, and guided with loving encouragement. The very first step to become a positive parent is to adjust one's thinking, by improving your own knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills. To achieve this, parents must be willing to reflect on themselves and their role as parents, do their best to complete all the activities; and use the new information in their daily interactions with their children. Parents will learn that communication is a crucial way to ensure an ongoing relationship with their children.

Positive Parenting Manual

This manual allows us to begin thinking about how we can bring up a child without inflicting/causing physical harm. This method is known as positive parenting.

This manual focuses on specific tools such as:

- How to establish goals for you and your child
- How to spend quality time with your children
- How to express yourself and enable your child to express their feelings in a safe environment
- How to use praise and reward
- How to give instructions and establish household rules
- How to redirect and ignore negative behaviours
- How to use consequences and establish cool down times
- How to resolve conflicts

By repeatedly referring to this manual, you will gain a sound understanding of the different methods available to discipline your child.



**What positive parenting is:**

- Positive parenting is about long-term solutions that develop children's self-discipline.
- Positive parenting is clear communication of expectations, rules and limits.
- Positive parenting is about building a mutually respectful relationship with your children.
- Positive parenting is about teaching children life-long skills.
- Positive parenting is about increasing children's competence and confidence to handle challenging situations.
- Positive parenting is about teaching courtesy, non-violence, empathy, self-respect, human rights and respect for others.

What positive parenting is not:

- Positive parenting is not permissive parenting.
- Positive parenting is not letting children do whatever they want.
- Positive parenting is not about having no rules, limits or expectations.
- Positive parenting is not about short-term reactions or alternative punishments to slapping and hitting.



A common complaint among parents is that their children are not obedient.

"This child is very disobedient. S/he never listens to anything we say." "S/he always does what we ask her/him not to do. Not in the least bit obedient." Are statements like these made in your family? Do you feel that your children are disobedient?

In your opinion, what characteristics are typical of a child who is obedient? A child who is inclined to be disobedient?

List them separately.

Disobedient	Obedient

Compare your column on obedience with that of another parent's column on obedience. Have a discussion on this. You most probably will see both similarities and differences between the two lists.

Reflect on your own parenting style and consider how you contribute to this behavior.



The differences highlight that what we consider as obedience/disobedience is a relative factor. This just means that the way you think of it is different to the way someone else thinks about it.

Once you have a clear understanding of the key behaviours you want to see or change, try out the strategies below to address these behaviours and support your child to think and act independently.



1. Make a list of what is considered good and bad behaviour at home, the boundaries of these behaviours as well as the consequences of not adhering to the boundaries. Depending on the age of your child/children, do this together with them. Display this list at home in a place where everyone can see.
2. Appreciate and praise the child every time s/he displays good behaviour. The love you show towards your child must be unconditional and positive.
3. Also note, we should disapprove and dislike the wrongful behaviour of the child, not the child himself.

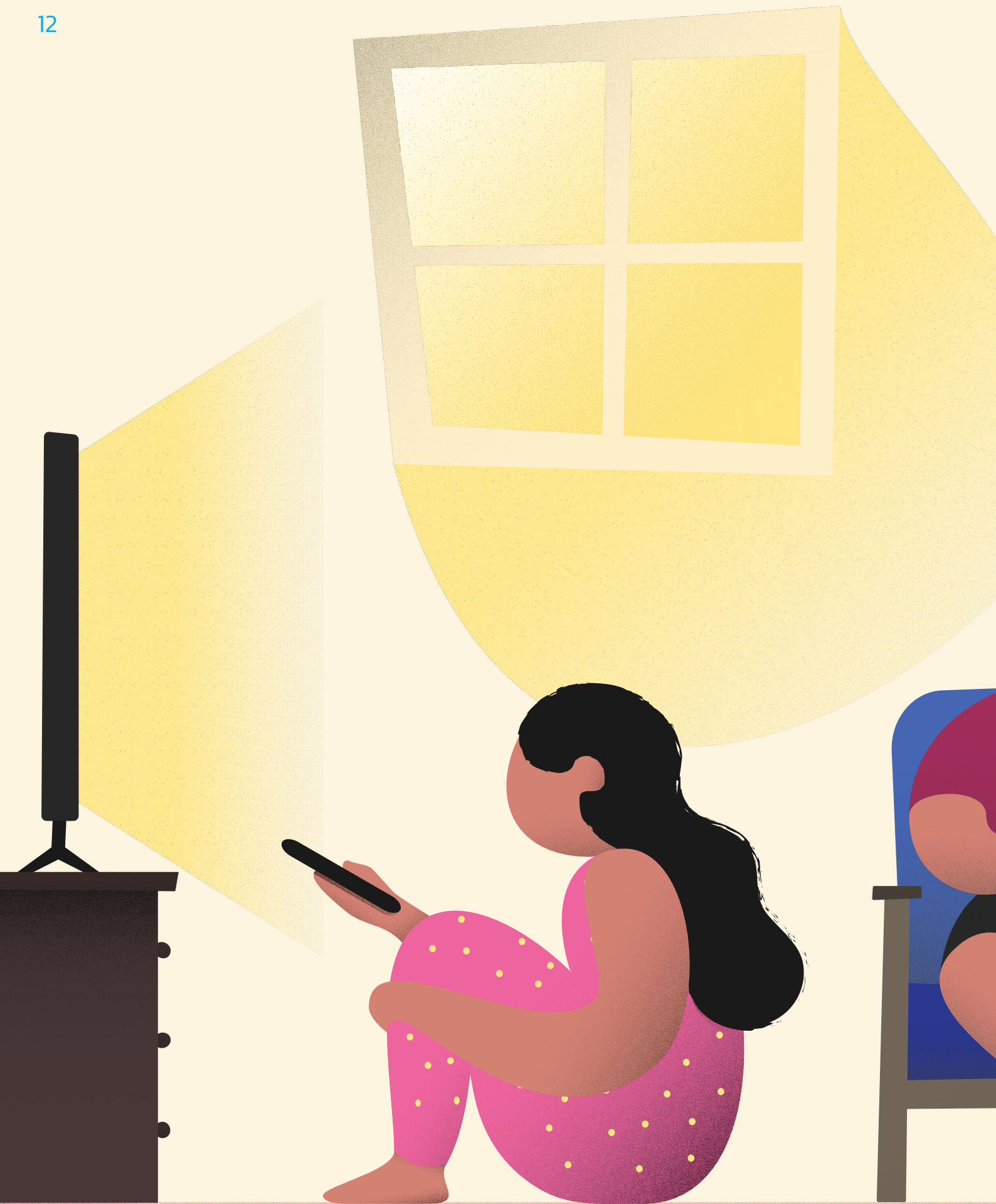
At times, parenting can be difficult! So, it is important to keep in mind that these positive parenting techniques take time and patience to be successful. It cannot be achieved in one day. If they don't work today, remember to try again tomorrow. It is important to be consistent in your parenting approach and being consistent is the only way your child may be able to understand what you are trying to communicate.

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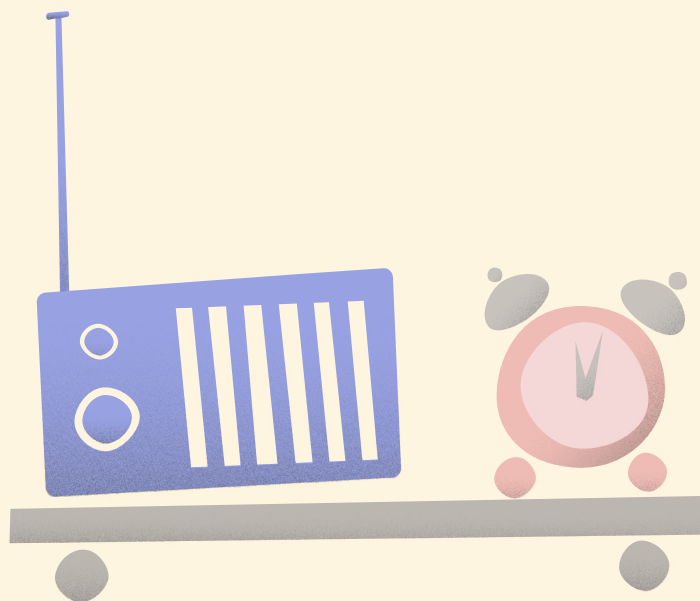
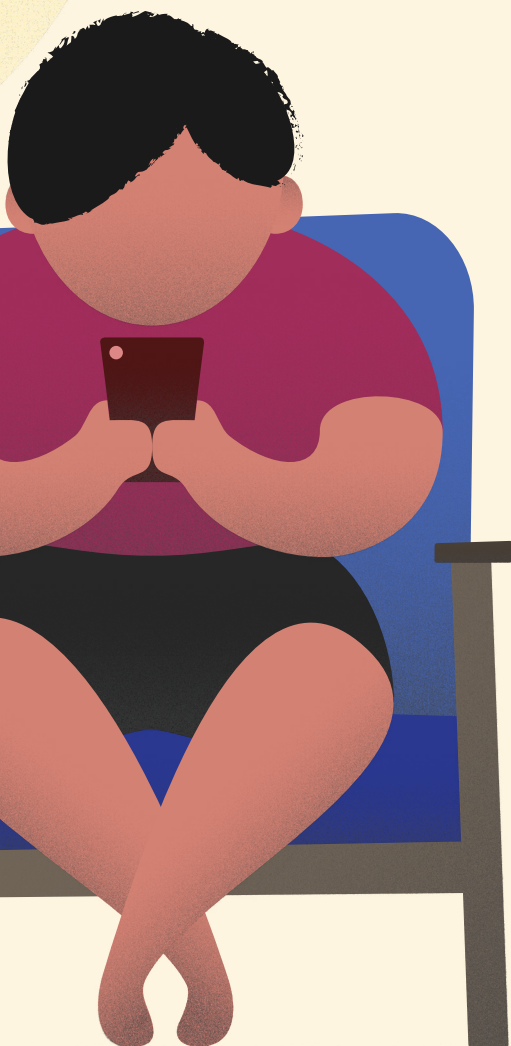
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Parenting for Lifelong Health: Handbook for Adolescents





SETTING LIMITS ON THE USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES



Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of digital devices has increased, with children spending more of their time online and on devices. It is important to set clear rules and limitations on the use of digital devices to ensure your children's healthy development, as well as their safety online.

Screen Time

Below is a short story about an incident that took place because of a little boy who spent too much time watching television.

"I see you have started watching TV already, have you really finished all your schoolwork?" father asked Krishna who was watching a cartoon, as he walked across the hall.

Krishna did not reply.

Father turned towards Krishna as he did not receive any response. He was engrossed in the cartoon. Father went towards Krishna, shook him and said, "Enough watching TV now..." "Only a little more", Krishna cut in, without even looking at his father.

Father heard the neighbor Sumana Achchi calling out to him and so left the room. He returned home an hour later and heard Krishna's laughter from the hall. Krishna was doubled over in laughter watching the programme on the television. Father then became stern and said

"Krishna, how long has it been since I told you that it was enough TV time? I thought you would be studying by now. From what time have you been in front of the TV?

Give that to me!" said father, and snatched the remote control from Krishna's hand.

As father tried to turn off the TV with the remote, Krishna grabbed it back, switched on the television, unfazed, and continued to watch his programme. Krishna started laughing again because it was a funny cartoon. Father tried to grab the remote control again from Krishna but Krishna started running around the hall with it.

Father started to run behind him and he knocked over a chair and bruised his leg. Father got hold of Krishna and slapped him. The remote control which was in Krishna's hand fell down and broke into pieces. Krishna's ear turned red because of the slap, and he started groaning in pain. Father then shouted,

"How many hours have you been watching TV? You have absolutely no interest in studying! My throat is hoarse after shouting! Don't you dare touch the TV again!"

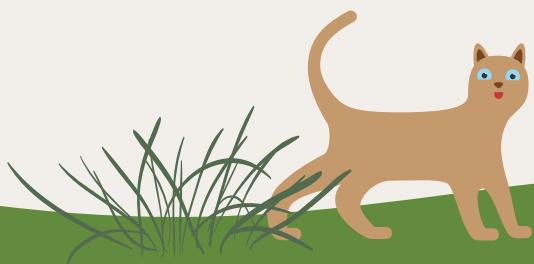


Answer the following questions

Krishna is an eleven-year-old boy. How do you feel about father's response to Krishna spending too much time watching television?

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Have similar incidents taken place in your home when your children use their devices for a long time? Did these incidents end in an unpleasant manner?

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What rules have you put in place at your home for your children, about using their devices?

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Although your children may not break the rules about using their devices, they may spend most of their free time on them. What are some possible reasons for children spending a great deal of time on digital devices?

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How to manage Screen time

There is now a lot of research to show that the development and wellbeing of children who spend long hours on digital devices is often negatively affected. Such children tend to devote their attention to screens above everything else, usually at the expense of the time they have for their education and playing with others. Therefore, parents should limit a child's screen time, but not prohibit it completely. Watching TV, using the phone and computer can bring children joy and be a medium of learning new knowledge.

The National Child Protection Authority (2021) has highlighted some guidelines that can be used to manage a child's screen time.

- Children below the age of one and a half years should not be allowed to use any form of digital screen. With parental guidance, however, it is acceptable to engage the child in a video call etc. if needed.
- Children between the ages of one and a half and two years may be allowed to watch quality television programmes under parental supervision, for a limited period.
- It is not suitable for children between the ages of two and five years to spend more than one hour in front of the television per day.
- The amount of screen time allowed for children above the age of six years, may vary depending on the nature of the programme that they are watching.



Engaging with digital programmes can give rise to harmful consequences, but there are useful aspects to it too. Therefore, do not enforce excessive limitations and keep your children away from all technology. Encourage them to use digital technology to engage in education as needed. However, screen time in general should be managed and an excessive amount of time should not be spent on digital devices.

Keep in mind that being on a digital device close to bedtime can cause a reduction in the quality of sleep obtained.



A few factors to be considered when taking measures to limit a child's screen time

1. First, find out what type of programmes your child watches.
2. Then identify which are her/his favourite programmes among them.

E.g.: Cartoons, children's movies, musical programmes, educational programmes, discovery programmes, teledramas, news telecasts, adult programmes (teledramas, films, or other entertainment programmes)
3. Thirdly, decide how much time can be allocated for your child to watch television or use any other device, so that they can complete other routine activities.

A point to remember

It is important to make sure the programme is appropriate for the child's age, know the time during which the specific programme is aired and know the duration of the programme.

If you discipline the child using positive reinforcement such as engaging the child in meaningful activities, spending too much time on a digital device is not likely to be an issue.

Spending time playing digital games

There are many children in Sri Lanka who play games using the television, a computer or a mobile phone. We have often heard people say that children prefer digital gaming to outdoor or physical forms of playtime.

What are these digital sports or games? Are there digital sports or games that are specifically designed for children? What are they like? With whom do they engage when playing? These are questions which need to be addressed.

Most children in Sri Lanka use either the computer or their parent's mobile phones for gaming. If they have one, they may also use a tablet to play video games. Additionally, for children living in and around urban areas, there are gaming centers available. These gaming centers charge a fee from the customer, with which they can access a range of video games that can be played individually or in groups.

Similar to watching television, video gaming too has its advantages and disadvantages. Video games are now a normal part of modern childhood and they can be a powerful tool to help children develop life skills such as negotiation, patience and following rules etc. However, if children are given the freedom to play video games with no parental guidance or supervision, they can begin to prioritize gaming over outdoor play and socializing with friends. They may also play games that are violent or not appropriate for their age.





Therefore, if a specific time is not allocated to play video games, children can spend excessive time engaging with digital technology, which can cause them great harm and have adverse effects on their well-being and development.

Let us now read a short story about a small child who was obsessed with gaming.

Mala listens into the happenings in the living room as she cooks. There is absolutely no noise. Where have the children gone? Mala pokes her head into the bedrooms, but no one is in sight. She notices her younger son sitting in the corner of the veranda. Mala calls out to him. He does not respond..

She goes up to him. He is playing a video game using Mala's mobile phone.

"Ah! Are you playing games on my phone as well now? Give that back to me, without breaking it!" Mala tries to take her phone out of his hand as she says this, but Hansaka pushes her hand away.

"I need to make a call as well.

Bring my phone back to me in a little while" says Mala as she walks away. She finishes all her work and comes back an hour later, and

Hansaka is still playing the game.

Mala goes up to him and grabs the phone from his hand. "Oh no! I was at the best part – you ruined it!" shouts Hansaka and starts

running after and grabbing the phone back from his mother.

Their neighbour Seetha catches sight of Mala running behind her son. "Can you see this? Can't keep a phone idle! They just take it and play games without even asking," Mala tells Seetha.

"Our house is even worse. They have not eaten since morning. My son has gotten together with your Mayura and they're playing games on the computer," says Seetha.

"I have no idea what to do Seetha. They don't listen no matter what I say. My younger fellow has also started playing games now. They don't study at all."

"I am tired of telling them the same thing, repeatedly. I leave them to do whatever they want and mind my own business. Last week the children were hit by their father for playing games. When they get low grades at the exams it will be too late."

As Seetha says this, Mala also feels puzzled as to what they could do about this.





What steps can you take to limit and manage time spent on gaming and protect the child from its harmful effects?

- **Include a specific time for video games in their daily timetable.** It is important for this timetable to not be rigid. Make sure you leave room for flexibility, because it is not appropriate or feasible to expect a child to follow a daily timetable stringently. A timetable is kept in place to help a child complete their daily tasks.
- **Talking to parents who have children with similar habits**, can also be a way of understanding how to deal with this issue. Find out what methods they adopt to tackle similar situations and how they limit or control behaviour which is not acceptable. However, remember to practice these methods only if they are positive ways of discipling the child.
- **It is important to allow them to own a device at an appropriate age.** This should be at an appropriate age when the child is responsible enough to use the device with care and safety. Evaluate the needs of the child for having this device, perhaps it is needed for educational reasons or simply for leisure.
- **Allocate times during which they can use the device to game.** Setting aside time on weekends, after chores or after they finish their homework.
- **Enable Parental Restrictions/controls** and apps on the device to block harmful and mature content so that your child is safe when using the device.



Online safety

Some games require children to play online with other players, who they may have never met or seen. It is important to educate your child on the manner in which they should conduct themselves with strangers, such as not giving out personal information, sending photos of themselves and also behaving in a respectful manner with other players.

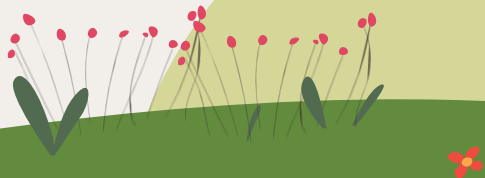


Online Safety: NCPA guidelines

- Given the covid pandemic situation, most children and adolescents will spend some of their time online. So do educate your children and adolescents about online safety.
- As parents, you can openly express your worries and concerns about being online to your child/adolescent and keep them aware of the possible dangers.
- Educate them about protecting their online identity through privacy settings.
- Ask them to keep track of their friends online- not to share any personal information to people who they don't know, or to people whom they have not met.
- Educate them about reporting an account if they feel that a person is sending bad images/messages and block that account

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Notes



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