SCREENS AND TEENS

A common topic of conversation I have had with parents at the College , both as a Year Advisor and now as ICT leader, is how to monitor and manage their child's use of laptops and phones. Technology has brought so many benefits to education; it enhances engagement in the classroom, assists with study and revision, cuts down on paperwork, allows us to communicate quickly and easily with you as parents, and saves students carrying around the heavy trove of textbooks that we had to when we were at school! However, it also raises questions about how to set boundaries and support healthy screen habits.

Here at the College, our boundaries over device use are made clear to students:

- If at College, phones must be in College phone pouches from 7.55am to 2.35pm each day. If students or parents need to contact each other during school hours, they can do so through the front office. If students are seen using their phones during this time, they will be asked to take them to the Senior School Hub and will receive a lunchtime detention.
- Laptops are only to be opened in class when the teacher gives permission. While laptops are often used for textbooks and interactive learning activities, some lessons will be laptop-free. There is also an expectation in most classes that notes will still be handwritten, rather than typed.

However, these are not always foolproof, and it can be even harder to set boundaries in the home.

The best way to help your child navigate the online world is by being aware and actively engaging in conversation with your kids about their online and social media use.

Ten Tips for managing your teen's technology

Here are ten tips to help you in this journey:

1. **Frequently talk with your child about their technology use** – Ask about their favourite apps, websites, and online interactions to foster open dialogue. As I speak to parents, it's great to hear that many of these conversations are already happening. As part of this, make sure you create open lines of communication – reassure your child that they can come to you if they feel unsafe online.
2. **Have access to or follow your child's accounts** – Know who they are interacting with and be aware of any potential risks.
3. **Check whether they are old enough for the Social Media they are using:** The government is bringing in new minimum ages for various social media sites, and if your child is under the minimum age, don't let them create an account.
4. **Use filters and parental controls** – Tools such as Family Zone and Covenant Eyes can help manage access to inappropriate content.
5. **Set time limits on device use** – Encourage balance by allocating specific times for study, relaxation, and screen-free activities.
6. **Charge devices outside the bedroom** – Keeping both laptops and phones in a public area overnight, such as the kitchen or dining room, can prevent late-night screen use and improve sleep quality. It's also essential for school that devices are adequately charged for the next day, so it's a win-win!
7. **Encourage stopping computer use an hour before bed** – This allows the brain and eyes to wind down for a better night's sleep. Encouraging your child to read before bed instead of being on their device may also promote literacy.
8. **Model healthy digital habits** – Children learn by example, so demonstrating good technology use yourself is essential.
9. **Encourage balance** – Help them find a balance between online and offline activities. Facilitating your child's participation in social activities outside of school, such as sporting groups, extracurricular activities, youth groups and church can help your child feel connected to those around them without spending lots of time online.
10. **The Importance of Consistency** - Like with all boundaries, consistency is key. Enforcing screen time rules, setting expectations, and maintaining open communication might not always be easy, but it is crucial in helping your child develop healthy technology habits. It is worth the energy investment and initial tension that having these conversations might cause!

Further resources

- The **eSafety Commissioner website** (www.esafety.gov.au) provides a wealth of resources on online safety, including guidance on cyberbullying, privacy, gaming, and social media. Parents can access tips, expert advice, and step-by-step support on managing their child's online experiences. You can also use this website to report illegal online activity such as cyberbullying, to the authorities.
- Our Director of Student Counselling, Mrs Peterson, often shares special reports and articles from **SchoolsTV** through this newsletter, covering topics such as screen time, internet addiction, social media, and cyberbullying. [Click here](#) to access the full range of articles, videos, and reports on SchoolsTV.
- The College has recently subscribed to an online wellbeing platform called **Wellio**. Wellio is hosting a **free upcoming webinar for parents** on Managing Device Use: Creating Healthy Tech Habits at Home, on Thursday 22nd May at 6.30pm. [Click here to register](#).

Mr Samuel Mills
ICT Leader, Year 8 Advisor and History Teacher