



**Preschool**

# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for intentional conversations with kids

Are you blown away that your preschooler can swipe and click even faster than you can? How did they figure out how to find that Disney video in the sea of app icons on your screen? These keen abilities are exactly why it's a great time to start a conversation about the big world of technology. Your preschooler is a long ways from having their own phone and social media accounts, but every day they are watching, listening and learning and they need you to guide their introduction into this world and set them up for success. Remember your role in the preschool phase is to help them...

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**ENJOY**  
the advantages



So they will . . .  
**EXPERIENCE BOUNDARIES  
& HAVE POSITIVE EXPOSURE**

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This guide is designed to help you meet your preschooler where they are now, giving you some words to say and not to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

## **TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success**



## WHAT TO SAY:

"Playing on mommy and daddy's phone can be fun, but you always need to ask us first."

"We love to talk to each other while we eat, so we are not going to play a game or watch a video during a meal time."

"You can watch/play for \_\_\_\_ minutes, and then we will do something else." (*read books, put together a puzzle...*)

Talk about your rules for phone and screen use in terms your preschooler can understand. Be clear about your screen-free zones and times and stick to them.

You will want to capture those adorable moments by taking pictures, but be careful to not miss the moment because you're distracted by posting or sharing.

Model the great ways to use technology by playing learning games together.



## WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"Here, take my phone and watch whatever you want. Just be quiet."

"Stop asking questions about what I'm doing on my phone."

"There are scary people that can connect with you through the phone and computer so you should never use them." *(While we want to set firm boundaries for our children, we don't want them to think technology is bad)*

## JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The preschool years are the years you want to embrace their physical needs. They need to be physically close to you so use screen time as opportunities for 'lap time' where you can cuddle and share the experience. In this phase, your child thinks like an artist, and you can help them learn by engaging their senses through what they see and hear. Remember that screen time doesn't have to be isolating but can be used to stimulate great moments together. Stay informed. Stay involved. Start the conversation.

## It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

As a parent, you want to invest your time in things that matter. Like having the right conversation with your child at the right time, with the right things to say at your fingertips. These conversation guides will help you navigate the critical issues you face at each phase, as you imagine the end for your child. They are based on research from **The Phase Project**, a collaborative, ongoing effort assembling classic and innovative research with practical application.



**Elementary**

# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for intentional conversations with kids

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They might not have asked yet, but kids want to know when they'll be able to get their own phone, have their own social media profiles, and interact with friends online. Start the conversation about technology now, and begin setting clear guidelines. Kids know they can get their license at sixteen, which gives them something to look forward to. Set expectations about when they can get their 'technology license' too. Technology can be a positive experience as long as parents stay informed and involved.. Remember your role in the elementary phase is to help them...

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**EXPLORE**  
the possibilities



So they will . . .  
**UNDERSTAND CORE VALUES  
& BUILD ONLINE SKILLS**

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This guide is designed to help you meet children where they are now, giving you some words to say and not to say as you navigate the critical issue of faith. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

## **TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success**

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## WHAT TO SAY:

"Google can be amazing, but it's very important that you don't ever Google without me."

"What do you think is the right age for a student to get a phone?"

"We have to be careful with Google. If we type in the wrong thing, we might end up somewhere we don't want to go."

"What kind of computer gadgets do your friends have?"

"Do any of your friends own their own phone yet?"

"When you get together with friends who have phones, do you ever create videos, text each other or do anything like that?"

"We're proud of the young man/lady you are becoming. Before long you'll be ready for your own phone. We think when you're (*age you decide*) you'll be ready to handle that kind of responsibility."

"Will you help me decide where to put the family computer? We have three choices – living room, kitchen (*or name another open area of your house*)?"

"We're here to help you learn how to use technology in a safe and fun way. That's why we have to know your passwords and what you're doing with your phone. As you get older, you'll gain more freedom. But for now, we're in this together."

"We're on the same team when it comes to technology. I trust you, but I'm not quite ready to trust the other 800 million people on the internet. You can count on us to help you."

"Let's talk about our family rules for using the computer (*i.e don't ever post our home address*)."

"Have you seen anything online that surprised you? It's always ok for you to talk with me about it."



## WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"I didn't have a cell phone growing up. You'll survive without one."

"I can't believe your friends parents already let them have a phone. That's terrible."

"Kids your age shouldn't even be thinking about phones. That's crazy!"

"I guess you can have a phone if all of your friends already have phones."

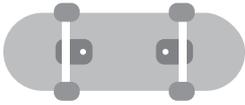
"We will talk about it when I'm ready."

## JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The elementary years are full of possibilities and you want to engage their interests in a healthy way. Use technology to share things you enjoy. Stay curious about what they are seeing and learning and help them to feel safe in bringing their questions to you. When they push back against your rules and guidelines, engage them in talking about the 'why' behind the rules. Stay informed. Stay involved. Keep the conversation going.

## It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

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**Middle School**

# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for intentional conversations with kids

Your middle schooler might seem tech savvy, but they're not life savvy yet. They might want complete freedom online, but they're not ready for it. Don't make privacy something you're taking away from them, but rather something you're working toward as a team. Be clear about it and the best of your ability, paint the picture that both of you have the same goal—an awesome experience with technology. Remember your role at in this phase is to help them...

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**COLLABORATE**  
a plan



So they will . . .

**RESPECT LIMITS  
& STRENGTHEN SOCIAL ABILITIES**

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This guide is designed to help you meet your middle schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say and not to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

## **TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success**

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## WHAT TO SAY:

"This is new for both of us, but we're in this together and I want technology to be fun."

"We're going to be talking about this a lot over the years. I want you to be able to ask me anything about your phone, apps, websites – any form of technology – and I want to be able to ask you anything too."

"Will you show me how to set up my own Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc? I want us to be able to follow each other. But I promise not to comment on your pictures."

"Some phone plans have limits on how much data you can use and how many text messages you can send. Let's talk about yours so you can avoid ever going over them."

"Let me show you where your phone will charge at night from \_\_\_\_\_ (beginning time) to \_\_\_\_\_ (time your child can have it)"

"Do you know that everything you put online, post, text or Tweet is public? Nothing online is private."

"Have you run into any jerks online lately? Read or seen anything that made you feel bad or uncomfortable?"

"Technology is a great way to talk to people but not about people."

"What kind of apps do your friends have? I want to follow them too." (Tip: moms can follow all friends but it's best that dads only follow the guy friends)

"Treating others the way you want to be treated goes for technology too. Don't post or say anything that you wouldn't want said or posted about you."



## WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"I don't care what you do with it, you just better not break it."

"As long as you keep your grades up, I don't care what you do with your phone."

"You're smarter than I am about that stuff. You'll figure it out by yourself."

## JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The middle school years are a great time to affirm their journey. Respect their growing need for privacy, but don't hesitate to establish boundaries. They won't always act like it, but they need you now more than ever as they enter the much bigger world of technology. They're now connected to people and information at the touch of a finger. This can be a super fun time for your family or a disaster. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.

## It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

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High School

# TECHNOLOGY

## PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for intentional conversations with kids

Is every kid ready for total privacy online just because they're in high school? Of course not – just like every 16 year old isn't automatically mature enough for a drivers license. But at this age, expect your child to push back on the concept of shared passwords and shared social media accounts. If over the years they've earned your trust and are ready for more freedom, consider giving it to them. If they haven't, discuss what they can do to move toward that. In a few short years they're going to jump out into the world. Give them space to practice that freedom now in the safety of our home. Remember your role in this phase is to help them...

**EXPAND**  
their potential



So they will . . .

**ESTABLISH PERSONAL BOUNDARIES  
& LEVERAGE ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES**

This guide is designed to help you meet your high schooler where they are now, giving you some words to say and not to say as you navigate the critical issue of technology. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

## **TECHNOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Leveraging the potential of online experiences to enhance my offline community and success**



## WHAT TO SAY:

"What social media accounts are you using these days?"

"Did you know you can disable the location feature from your phone? That's a great way to make sure that the people who you don't want to know your location don't have it. The Find My Phone feature helps everyone in our family find each other, so we keep that one on."

"Do you know that some colleges are now looking into applicants social media platforms when reviewing applications or considering athletic scholarships?"

"What are some things you think you should post so that potential colleges see the best picture of you?"

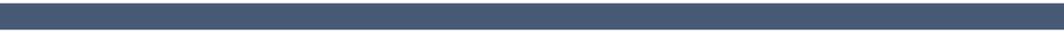
"If you text a friend something, you should be prepared for them to text it to another person. If you have something personal to say to a friend, it's best to do it over coffee or on a phone call. That way nothing gets lost in translation either."

"If someone looked at everything you post online and tweet-what would they learn about who you are?"

"Now that you're in high school and gaining more freedom, it's time yo begin sharing some of the financial responsibility of having a phone."

"I know it's tempting to use your phone while driving. I'm tempted to do it too. Can you help keep me in check about not using my phone while driving? And, of course I'll do the same for you."

"Hey, did you know your small group/our church is on Instagram/Facebook? Do you follow them?"



## WHAT NOT TO SAY:

"I read an article online about how dumb teenagers are on social media. You're not being an idiot are you?"

Nothing. The tendency at this phase is to disconnect and not say anything. Fight to be an informed and involved parent. Keep the conversation going.

Anything that assumes the worst. It's great to ask questions and be informed, but it's not okay to make assumptions about what they're doing. Just because some children use certain social media inappropriately doesn't mean that every child is using it that way. If you're concerned, ask your son or daughter to show you their feed or their messages.

## JUST REMEMBER

Every PHASE is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The high school years are the years to mobilize their potential. Your teenager is approaching adulthood with freedom on the horizon. The conversations you have today will help prepare them to make wise choices concerning technology for the rest of their lives. Stay informed. Stay involved. And keep the conversation going.

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