

PARENT'S
GUIDE
TO TECHNOLOGY



ParentTechGuide.com

CONTACT INFO

Dave Harris
dharris@secc.org

ParentTechGuide.com



NO MAGIC CHECKBOX

TECHNOLOGY CAN'T SOLVE THE PROBLEM

If you have ever worked with computers, you have probably experienced spending hours trying to solve a problem only to find you forget to check a box somewhere that instantly fixes everything. Although there are tools to help, there is no app, setting, or magical checkbox that will save the day! The real solutions comes from investing into the situation, letting them know you care about them, having tough conversations, creating accountability, building their character, and teaching them to use technology in a way that honors God.

THE HEART OF IT

1

BUILD CHARACTER

Technology isn't inherently evil, it's more about how we choose to use technology. As parents and Christians, it's our responsibility to build character in our children, so once they reach adulthood they are able to make responsible decisions on their own. With technology, we need to give them healthy Biblical guidelines and boundaries that create long-term values. Facebook won't last forever (thank goodness), but God's truth will always transcend our culture. It becomes less about the technology and more about guiding our child to make good choices - giving them a filter to know the difference between right and wrong. How we use and teach our children to use technology is an extension of our values and character. We need to raise a generation that reclaims technology for the kingdom of Christ and uses it in a way that is pleasing to God.

Proverbs 22:6 Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. (NIV)

2

MODEL THE WAY

The truth is, children learn the most from watching how we act and respond to situations. The same is true when it comes to areas of technology. They see the time spent and how we are using our time with technology. It's important we follow the same rules and expectations we place on our children. If there is a rule of 'No technology at the dinner table', then the same rules apply for us as parents. The best way to build character in our children is to be the example and set the pace for our families.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (NIV)

3

CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY

We all need to be held accountable at one time or another to make sure we stay focused on living how God intended us to live. As parents, it's important that we create a healthy accountability with our children as they grow in their faith. Simple things like random and frequent checks of their phone let your child know that you are invested in their world. This will also hopefully make them think a little harder the next time they are tempted to do something inappropriate since they know their parent will check. Another option (my recommendation), is to use parental controls on the phone to disable their ability to install an app. This forces them to come to you to ask permission to install anything on their phone, which lets you track everything installed on the phone and forces a conversation. This idea lets you set expectations before they use an app rather than being reactive when it's often too late.

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (NIV)

4

SEE IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

Sometimes changing our perspective can also change our approach. Technology can be really intimidating or even a little scary, but it's important as parents that we focus less on the technology and more on the teaching opportunity. We can use technology as a catalyst to have conversations with our teenagers about issues such as sex, dating, pornography, bullying, peer pressure, etc. An example might be when your child is ready to setup an Instagram or Facebook account, use it as an opportunity to set expectations and have tough conversations about big issues they will face. We can use technology to teach them practical ways to apply Biblical truth to their lives.

2 Timothy 3: 16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NIV)

HEALTHY GUIDELINES

Understand the phone belongs to the parent, the child is using it as a privilege

The parent is the one who signs the contract. Since it's a privilege, they understand the phone can be taken away if boundaries are broken.

Set Clear Expectations

Be upfront and clear. If your child has a better understanding of the expectations of using the phone it becomes easier to enforce boundaries.

NO Secret Passwords or Accounts

Access to all their accounts adds another level of accountability.

You break it, you buy it

Take responsibility for any physical damage to the phone and responsibility for any plan overages including voice minutes, texting, and data.

Just because your friend has it, doesn't mean you will

All apps can be setup to be approved by mom and dad. They can wait for your permission to install an app which gives you control over which apps are installed on the phone. They don't always need the latest, greatest, or newest phone.

EVERYTHING is Public

Colleges and Employers now look at Facebook as a reference. Anyone can pass along whatever is posted with a screenshot, saving a file, reposting, quoting, etc. Once it's online, it can be online forever.

Device will be checked for any inappropriate content

Porn, explicit music, cursing, photos of anything inappropriate, etc. Random and frequent phone checks create healthy accountability.

Your presence online is representing yourself, your families, Jesus, and your church

Anything done on the phone could be done in the presence of Mom, Dad, or Jesus. Their online presence can be used to show they are an authentic follower of Christ.

Time with the phone

Define acceptable times of use.
Define non-acceptable times - school, bedtime, at the dinner table, etc. Define the amount of time spent playing games. Be sure to adjust times with age and maturity as they build your trust.

Proper Etiquette

Know when to silence or turn off the phone - movies, restaurants, etc. Shouldn't use the phone when interacting with someone in person. Be respectful to others and not rude. Choose appropriate times to listen to music and text. This is a direct reflection of how we use our phones as parents. Set a good example.

When Mom and Dad call, always answer, no matter what

The parent should be able to reach the child at any time.

Never use technology in a way that is hurtful to others

Never say anything over text or a social network you wouldn't say to someone in person. Never create a fake account to make fun of someone else. Never post photos, videos, or text that could be embarrassing to someone else.

Reclaim technology to change the world for Jesus

Use apps, drawings, and photos to share their faith.

Use notes or a journal app as a prayer journal

Listen to worship music for a personal worship experience

Use texting to encourage others

Use the phone to be a listening ear for someone going through a tough time

Use it for a Bible reading - The Bible App

GOOD IDEA

Create a simple contract with your child using these guidelines to establish clear and up front expectations.



GET HELP

TOP 3 WAYS TO GET HELP

01

Honest conversations with other parents

Our children learn organically through relationships. They learn from their friends saying “Hey, have you seen this app. It’s amazing!”. As parents, we need to learn the same way. There is no way for us to possibly keep track of every new app or innovation. It’s important we share information with other parents.

02

Don’t be afraid to Ask

A free lunch can go a long way with a college student that knows way more about this stuff than us! Since there isn’t a map for this, you need to stop and ask for directions.

03

Google It

Books get outdated too quickly. Google will find the latest articles and information on any topic.

CAN MY SERVICE PROVIDER HELP?

IN SHORT, YES!

All major carriers offer family and parental control services. However, service features will vary for each provider and require an extra monthly fee. Also, not all devices are supported so make sure you purchase a compatible device if you would like to use the services.



Verizon | FamilyBase Service



T-Mobile | MobileLife and Family Allowance



AT&T | AT&T Smart Limits for Wireless



Sprint | Sprint Guardian



WHAT ABOUT MY WIRELESS ROUTER?

Many modern wireless routers used in homes can also help provide parental controls and protection. These controls can be used for any device connected to your home internet. For example, if you child has a friend over, the friend's device would be limited by the same controls as long as they are connected to your home wireless router. Features might include internet access during specific times and blocked content. If you are buying a new router, both Netgear and Linksys offer free parental control services.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN iOS AND ANDROID?

On the surface, Android and iOS are basically the same, right? Well, sort of. Both smartphone operating systems allow you install Apps, send text messages, surf the web, make phone calls, listen to music, watch videos, and even do the laundry (not really, but that would be nice!). The point is, they both do a ton, but there is a BIG fundamental difference between Android and iOS that affects your ability as a parent to control the device.



THE SANDBOX ANALOGY

Let's pretend that Android and iOS each have a backyard that makes up the entire functionality of the phone, and the developers (people who make the apps) stop by to play in the backyard. When the developers are making their apps, they aren't only allowed to play in the entire backyard, only a sandbox. The big difference between Android and iOS is how Apple (iOS) and Google (Android) limit the developer's control, or sandbox, the phone.



Apple as a company, generally speaking, is a bunch of control freaks! They have a small sandbox. However, most of the time this works in your advantage because Apple does a great job controlling the user experience which is why they make great products. Because of this, all the apps run on top of the operating system. What does this mean for you? Well, Apple doesn't allow other apps to control things such as text messaging, app control, time restrictions, etc. The only true parental controls offered on an Apple iOS are the controls built into iOS which are found in the settings app. This severely limits other developers to make parental control apps since Apple doesn't allow access needed to monitor the device. If an app in the App Store claims to offer parental control, they aren't giving you the full truth since their sandbox doesn't allow them to have access to truly monitor the device. Basically, there is no such thing as a parental control app in the App Store.



Google as a company, generally speaking, is more open. They have a much bigger sandbox (more like a beach). This means the app developers have more control over the entire device so it becomes possible to have apps that completely control and monitor every aspect of the device. This includes the ability to monitor text, apps, websites, and all the things you would expect with parental controls. However, it is important to note, Google currently offers NO built in parental controls or restrictions. If you are using an Android device, you MUST install a parental control app in order to have any control over the device. The downside to Google's open philosophy - apps can be more complicated due to a lack of quality control and the number of different Android devices.

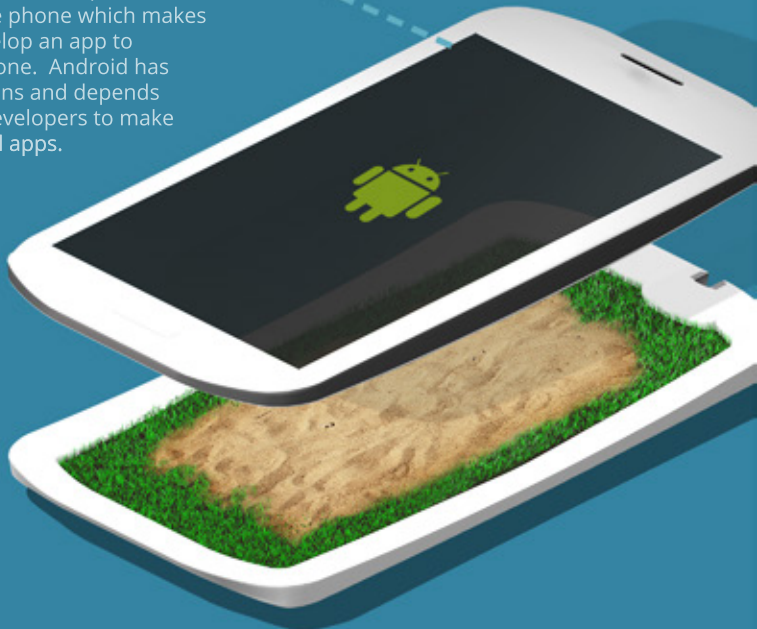
iOS

Developers (people who make the apps) have less control over the operating system. This makes it impossible for an app developer to make an app that will truly monitor the phone. Apple gives specific boundaries (smaller sandbox) for developers to work within.



ANDROID

Google gives developers more freedom (larger sandbox) and control over the phone which makes it easier to develop an app to monitor the phone. Android has built in restrictions and depends more on app developers to make parental control apps.





STUFF YOU NEED TO KNOW



Restrictions - Built In

For Android 4.2 and below there are NO built in or native restrictions. You MUST install an app to enable restrictions.



Apps - Parental Controls

MMGuardian Parental Controls - <http://mmguardian.com>

Parental Board - Parental Controls, <http://parentalboard.com>

Norton Family Parental Control - <http://onlinefamily.norton.com/familysafety>

Care4Teen Parental Control - <http://www.care4teen.com>

Mobiflock - Parental Controls, <http://mobiflock.com>

Kytelephone and Kytetime - Parental Controls - <http://kytetime.com>





Restrictions - Built In

Settings / General / Restrictions

Installing/Deleting Apps - Completely disables the App Store
Safari - enable or disable safari (iOS 7 has parental controls)
Set Ratings for Music, Movies, TV Shows, Books, Apps
Disable In-App purchasing

Website Restrictions

Disable Location Services
Disable Camera



Guided Access

Settings / General / Accessibility / Guided Access

Restricts to usage to a single app. Great for bedtime, travel, homework, etc. Once you enable Guided access, you can triple click the home button while in any app to start Guided Access. This will limit the phone to only use the current app. To exit, triple click again and enter your secret pin number.



iMessage

Settings / Messages / Send & Receive

Sends MMS over data or wifi connection without using texting plan. You can add your phone number or email to your child's account to monitor text messages sent via iMessage. Keep in mind iMessage is only used when sending to another iOS (iPhone, iPod, iPad) or Mac who is using iMessage. It doesn't include messages sent over traditional text plans.



Helpful Apps

Note: Because of the limitations Apple places on developers, apps cannot gain full control over the phone. Therefore, the only true parental control restrictions are the built in controls in the phone's Settings app. Apps, despite their claims, don't give you full control to monitor the phone. Below are some safe Browser alternatives to Safari (which can be disabled in Settings) and tracking apps to track the phone's location.

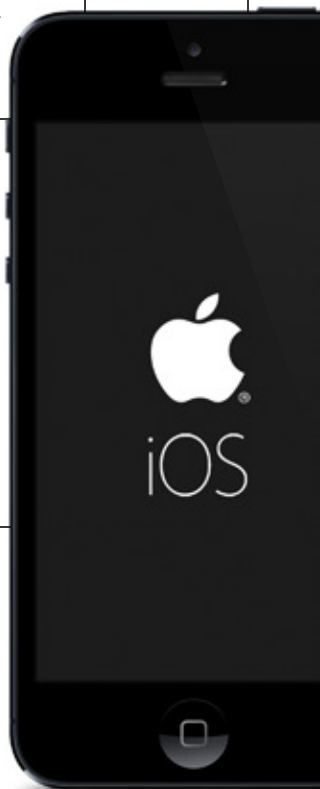
Life360 - Family tracker

MamaBear - Family tracker, monitor Facebook

Mobicip Safe Browser - Logs history, block sites

Mobiflock - Safe Browser, logs history, block sites

Find My Phone - Apple - Tracks phone when lost or stolen



**STUFF
YOU
NEED
TO KNOW**



Popular Apps



Facebook

Social Network

Most popular social network. Used to communicate with their friends, share photos, events, videos, etc. Most teens don't use this differently than parents since everyone is on facebook.



Twitter

Social Network

Service that allows people to share their thoughts, news, observations, photos, links, and more to the world in 140 characters or less per tweet. Hashtags (#) allow users to search for a topic or category which makes it easier to find inappropriate content.



Instagram

Photo and Video Sharing

Photosharing app. Considered a full social network since you can follow people, comment, tag, etc. Watch out for alternative accounts or fake accounts posing as someone else. Hashtags (#) allow users to search for a topic or category which makes it easier to find inappropriate content.



Google +

Social Network

Google's version of Facebook.



Vine

Video Sharing

Video version of Instagram. Allows users to share 6 seconds of video instead of photos. Integrates with Twitter. Hashtags (#) allow users to search for a topic or category which makes it easier to find inappropriate content.



Kik

Texting and MMS

Text messaging with the ability to send photos, audio, and videos. Uses WiFi and Data instead of traditional texting plans.



Snapchat

Texting and MMS

Share photos with others. The Catch - it allows you to specify the amount of time a photo can be seen by another person. Once it is viewed for the allowed amount of time, the photo is deleted from both devices. There is no way to see what was sent or received.



Facebook Poke

Texting and MMS

Facebook's version of Snapchat. It is separate from Facebook so any photo shared as a poke will not show up on Facebook.



Safety Levels of Popular Apps

Moderately Safe  

Not so Safe  

Just delete it!  



YouTube

Video Sharing

Website and App used to share videos. Computer web browsers offer parental control, but not the app.



Skype

Video and Text Chat

Skype allows people to make voice and video calls through a data or wifi connection.



Tumblr

Social Blogging

Tumblr is a blogging platform that allows users to post text, images, videos, links, quotes and audio to the web in short form. It's known for having pornographic content.



Facebook Messenger

Texting and MMS

Texting and MMS via a Facebook account.



Pinterest

Photo Sharing, Social Network

Pinterest allows people to pin images, kinda like a public bulletin board based on the interest of each user. Hashtags (#) allow users to search for a topic or category which makes it easier to find inappropriate content.



Google Chrome

Web Browser

Google's free web browser. It has Incognito mode which allows for private web browsing.



Firefox

Web Browser

Free web browser made by Mozilla. Allows users to browse in private mode.



Safari

Web Browser

Apple's free web browser. Default browser on all Apple devices. Allows users to browse in private mode.



CAUTION

TYPE OF APPS TO WATCH

Apps with In-App Browsers

Examples: Twitter, Facebook

In-App browsers are the ability to browse the internet from inside an app. It's like having Internet Explorer, Chrome or Safari built inside an app like Twitter or Facebook. For example, someone could tweet themselves a link to google, then after clicking on the link have access to search google from within the Twitter app. There is no history or tracking on in-app browsing.

Hidden File Apps

These apps come in the form of fake calculators, games, flashlights, etc. They can be used to access hidden files, photos, videos and even internet browsers. You can find these apps in the app store by searching for 'hidden files' or 'hidden browsers'.

Games with Social Components

Examples: Words with Friends (or anything ... with Friends), Clash of Clans

Some games can be used more for their chat and social components rather than gameplay.

Texting or Chat Apps

Examples: Kik, Facebook Message, MiTalk Messenger

Allows users to text and chat using Wifi or data connection. If you only check the main messaging app on the phone, you may not see everyone your child is texting.

VOIP Apps (Voice Over IP)

Examples: Google Voice, Google Talk, Skype

Allows users to setup (for free) separate phone numbers, texting, and voicemail. Uses data and Wifi instead of traditional voice plans. With these apps you can use an iPod or iPhone as an actual phone over Wifi.

Wallpaper Apps

Can contain inappropriate photos.

Texting Dictionary

Chatslang.com

<http://www.chatslang.com/>

Searchable list of texting acronyms. Free app is also available in the Apple App Store.

Glossary of Terms

3G

Cell Phone Data connection speed. Slower than the more updated 4G or LTE.

4G

Cell Phone Data connection speed. Faster than 3G, but slower than LTE.

@ Reply

Used with twitter to reply to a Tweet that someone else has posted, use an @reply by using the @ symbol followed by the other person's username. Used to notify a person they have been mention in a tweet.

Android

The operating system created by Google and used on many phones. This is the core software in order to make the phone function.

App

Software or Application that runs on top of the operating system. Example - Games, Email, Weather, Calendar, etc. Apps can be downloaded from the Apple App Store (Apple iOS) or the Google Play Store (Android).

App Store

Apple's retail store on iPhones, iPods, iPads, and Macs used to download apps, games, utilities, etc. Apps are purchased using an account and either a credit card or gift card.

Blog

A web site with a running list of articles usually about a specific topic. People can leave comments and have conversations about each blog post or article.

Bluetooth

Simple wireless connection between devices. Usually used for headphone audio, wireless mice and keyboards.

Browser

An app or software designed to search the internet. Popular browsers are Microsoft Internet Explorer, Apple Safari, Google Chrome, and Mozilla Firefox.

Cloud

Files, email, photos, documents that are stored to a server instead of your local computer. This allows you to access all your files through apps and web browsers through any computer or device. You must have an internet connection to use files stored on the cloud.

Facetime

Apple's version of video chat between iPhones or from an iPhone to a Mac computer. Other similar products are Skype and Google Hangout.

GPS

Global Positioning System - allows your device to find where you are located. Commonly used in maps or navigation apps.

GameCenter

Apple's gaming network that allows people to play games online with their friends.

Geofence

A GPS boundary setup so you can be notified if yourself or someone else enters or leaves a specific location boundary. Example - A notification can be sent if a device leaves the neighborhood or arrives at a specific address.

Geotag

A location tag placed on a document. Example - Geotags are used to tag a photo to show the photo was taken in a specific location.

Gmail

Google's popular free email service.

Google Play Store

Google's retail app store on Android phones and tablets used to download apps, games, utilities, etc. Apps are purchased using an account and either a credit card or gift card.

Hashtag

Public categories created on popular services such as Twitter and Instagram. All hashtags include # followed by the topic Example - #MarchMadness to see what other people are saying about the basketball tournament.

In-App Browser

The ability to search or find things on the internet within another app. Example - If you click on a link inside the Twitter app, it allows you to view pages and content on the internet without using a standard browser such as Safari or Chrome.

In-App Purchase

Purchase made from within an app. Example - Games use in-app purchases to buy new levels or features inside the game.

iCloud

Apple's version of cloud computing. Allows you to store email, documents, and photos on Apple's servers so you can access the files from any device or computer.

iMessage

Apple's text messaging service that uses wifi and data connections instead of the traditional texting plans offered through the cell phone service providers.

iOS

Apple's operating system for the iPhone, iPod, and iPad. The core software running on these devices.

Jailbreak

Term used to install an altered version of Apple's iOS which allows for additional functionality. Allows installation of apps not approved by the Apple App Store. Although it adds functionality, it can cause problems with the phone as well as all unsafe material including pornography and viruses.

LTE

The fastest current cellphone data connection. Faster than 3G and 4G.

Location Services

Feature in Apple's iOS that allows apps to access the current location of the phone. Apps must ask permission to use location services and these services can also be turned on or off at any time via the Settings app in iOS.

MMS

Multimedia Messaging Service - Texting that includes photos and videos.

Photo Stream

Apple's iOS feature to share photos taken on one device to another iPhone, iPad or computer.

Push Notification

Service used by apps to send instant messages or notifications. Example - Calendar reminders or a game reminding you it's now your turn.

QR Code

Bar code containing contact info or website info about a person or company. Example - Scan a QR code on a business card to import contact info into your phone or visit a specific website.

Rooting

The Android equivalent of Jailbreaking - to alter the core of the Google Android operating system for additional functionality. However, this can easily break your phone if you don't know what you are doing.

SMS

Short Messaging Service - Text Messaging

Social Network

An online community socially connecting people to one another. Popular social network apps include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Pinterest, Path,

Tweet

Term associated with Twitter to tell others on Twitter what you are doing. Tweets can be news, observations, linked photos, or other info limited to 140 characters per tweet.

URL

Uniform Resource Locator - Web site address typed into the address bar using a browser. Example www.google.com.

VOIP

Voice Over Internet Protocol - A voice phone call using the internet, wifi, or data connection instead of a standard Phone or Cell Phone signal.

WiFi

Wireless Internet connection.