

Online Safety for Fathers

What You Need to Know to Keep Your Kids Safe

As the school year is ending and our children are looking forward to a summer full of less structure, more free time and more fun, it is a perfect time for us fathers to step up, be informed, be intentional, and stay actively involved—setting healthy boundaries, guiding safe online habits, and making sure that freedom doesn't come at the cost of our children's well-being.

The internet isn't a trend—it's the world our kids are growing up in. While many of us didn't go online until adulthood, today's children live and breathe digital. From social media to video games, they're exposed to powerful tools that can educate, entertain—and also harm.

As fathers, we have to stay informed, intentional, and involved.

♦ The Risks Are Real:

Social media and video games are designed to be addictive. They target your child's developing brain, releasing feel-good dopamine hits that keep them hooked. Over time, too much screen use is linked to sleep loss, obesity, anxiety, depression, aggression, and even thoughts of self-harm. Cyberbullying, online predators, and distorted racial and gender messages in media only raise the stakes.

♦ Signs of Trouble:

Is your child angry when asked to stop playing? Sneaking screen time after bedtime? Losing interest in activities that don't involve a screen? These may be signs of digital overdependence.

♦ What Fathers Can Do:

- **Stay Involved – Know what your child watches, plays, and posts. Check search history. Talk regularly and without judgment.**
- **Set Limits – No screens during meals or an hour before bed. Stick to age-appropriate time limits.**
- **Use Parental Controls – Learn how to set restrictions and privacy settings on all apps and devices.**
- **Keep Kids Active – Encourage outdoor play, physical activity, and screen-free hobbies.**
- **Model Good Behavior – Show your kids what healthy tech use looks like by practicing it yourself.**

The internet isn't going anywhere—but neither are we. Fatherhood today means parenting in the digital age. Let's stay sharp, stay connected, and keep our kids safe, healthy, and growing strong—online and off.

Dads, having a family digital plan in place is a huge step toward keeping your children safe and healthy and your entire household more peaceful this summer! Here are some great additional resources on screen time and family digital plans.

<https://www.childrenandscreens.org/learn-explore/research/all-in-the-family/>

https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-And-Watching-TV-054.aspx

May, 2025

Jeff Kramer

Family Asset Building Programs Manager

Action for Children

Columbus, Ohio