

NEXTGen

Family Technology Agreement

Dearest Parents,

Have you ever wanted to throw your child's game system into oncoming traffic? Has your child ever made you cringe as they used technology in a way that hurt others? If so, you are not alone.

Along with the challenges "smart devices" bring, there are also great benefits and opportunities. Though some days we might like to, raising our kids apart from technology is not a realistic option.

Sometimes, without realizing it, we can send our children mixed messages. One minute, we are wrestling our kids to get off their device and do homework. Then, we are calling them to watch a funny YouTube we saw while "working."

It's a lot like teaching a teenager to drive. We don't always want them to do things the way we do ourselves. And like driving a car, learning to use technology is a long term lesson that takes time. They'll make mistakes, but those mistakes can be great teaching moments.

This resource isn't designed to tell you all the rules you should have in your home. Instead, let it be a guide for you and your family as you decide the best way to keep everyone safe, on the same page, and thrive. We want to equip you with the tools you need to launch an ongoing conversation with your child regarding the role of technology in their life. So as we get started, here are three goals:

Be a great example

The best thing we can do for our kids is to be adults modeling what we want them to become. What boundaries and accountability do I have in place for myself?

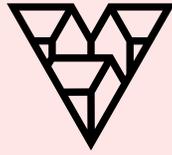
Do your research

Before allowing your child to use a device on their own, decide what access they will have to other content, what parental restrictions you can set, and if your child is able to communicate to anyone through these means. Research any new apps your child wants to download. Consistently sift through your child's devices to make sure they are upholding their end of the agreement.

Remember what's most important

Relationships matter more than technology. Your child's spiritual, social, psychological, educational, and physical development are more important than technology. Technology is to be a tool and an asset, never a roadblock or a hindrance. If, and most likely when, technology begins to negatively influence any of these areas it is time to see what changes can be made to get back on track.

- Village Church Next Generation Team



Technology Values

Like any good conversation we get to start with our values and make sure we are on the same page. The Tech-Wise Family by Andy Crouch is a must read for all families. In this book Crouch outlines 3 choices and 10 commitments that will breathe life into a family's tech world. We encourage parents to assess how these choices and commitments are playing a part in their family's technology life.

The 10 commitments begin with three choices that are especially fundamental.

Choose character. Make the mission of your family, for children and adults alike, the cultivation of wisdom and courage.

Shape space. Make choices about the place where you live that put the development of character and creativity at the heart of your home.

Structure time. Build rhythms into your life on a daily, weekly and annual basis. These rhythms make it possible for you to get to know your family, God and your world in deeper ways.

10 TECH-WISE COMMITMENTS

1. We develop wisdom and courage together as a family.
2. We want to create more than we consume. So we fill the center of our home with things that reward skill and active engagement.
3. We are designed for a rhythm of work and rest. So one hour a day, one day a week, and one week a year, we turn off our devices and worship, feast, play and rest together.
4. We wake up before our devices do, and they “go to bed” before we do.
5. We aim for “no screens before double digits” at school and at home.
6. We use screens for a purpose, and we use them together, rather than using them aimlessly and alone.
7. Car time is conversation time.
8. Spouses have one another’s passwords, and parents have total access to children’s devices.
9. We learn to sing together, rather than letting recorded and amplified music take over our lives and worship.
10. We show up in person for the big events of life. We learn how to be human by being fully present at our moments of greatest vulnerability. We hope to die in one another’s arms.

Which choice and which commitment is your greatest strength as a family?

Which are your greatest weakness?

What is one way you can start to grow in this area of weakness?

What are some of your family’s values regarding technology?

CONVERSATION TIPS

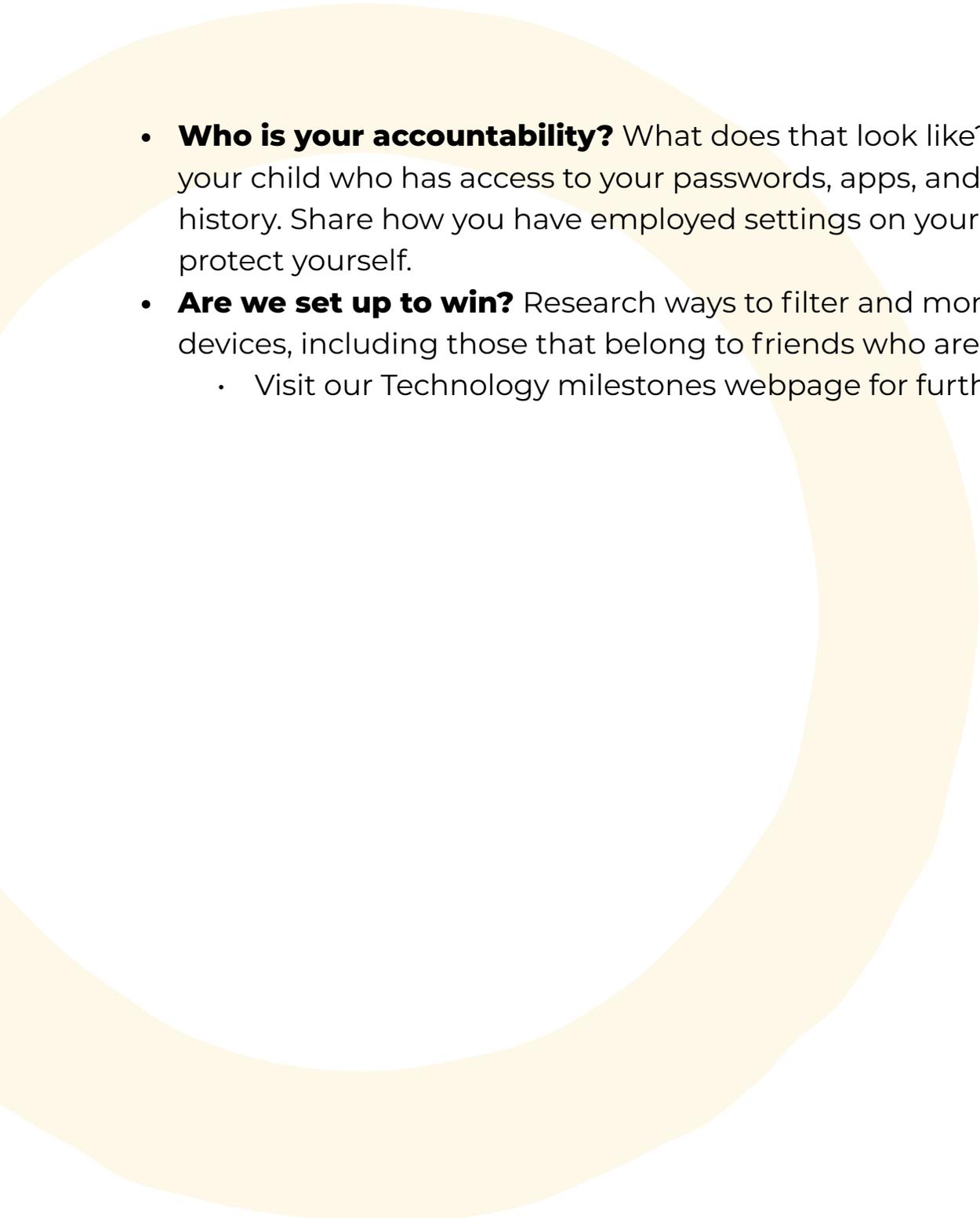
- **Discuss before and discuss now.** The best way to set up a system is before it starts, and to do regular maintenance on the system as needed. However, if you aren't having these conversations before you have given your child a device, then the best time is now. You can tell your child that you wish these conversations happened earlier, but want to own them now that you are equipped and informed.
- **Share with your child that technology is a privilege,** but relationships are more important. Technology thrives when it is connecting people. Anytime technology begins to disconnect people we will have to formulate a new way to bring it back to thriving.
- **What age or stage is appropriate for my child to have different devices?** Different children will be ready for devices according to their own story. However, there are some developmental guidelines we believe help children to thrive. No screens before double digits. Wait to eighth for a personal cell phone. Wait till 15 for the full access to social media and smart phone. Hours spent consuming on devices should be less than hours spent creating and enjoying get real world they live in.
- **Introduce the idea that any device (gaming system, iPad, phone, kindle, tablet, tv, computer) is powerful.** Technology is like fire, it can bring beauty, warmth, and protection when used for good. However, it can quickly become dangerous and destructive when used out of its purpose. Let your children know you are going to help them use this power in a way that is life giving.
- **Cast vision for the future.** Help your child to understand that this is an opportunity to learn and build trust. If and when they are given more privileges someday (ex: Smart phone) will directly be related to how well they handle each tool responsibly.

- **Set expectations and prioritize this is an ongoing conversation.** Of course it is important to have rules and consequences, but it's even more important to keep the lines of communication open. Make sure your child knows that they won't be punished if they see or hear something they don't understand, encourage them to come to you first and fast.
- **Simulate emergency conversations.** It is likely that at some point despite your best efforts to protect, your child will see or hear something that isn't appropriate. Talk with your child about how to handle it. What should they do? Who should they talk to? How should they start this conversation?
- **Be approachable.** A light heart makes conversations soar further. It's important that we can have serious and weighty conversations but make them feel like a warm hug. These boundaries are our attempt at bringing freedom to our child. Freedom won't always look attractive immediately, but it should always reflect the warmth, light, and connection of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

PARENT TECHNOLOGY WORKSHEET

Throughout this discussion guide, you will be prompted to share with your child how you have set wise boundaries as an adult. Before those conversations start, take time to think through these questions and discuss them with your spouse or co-parent.

- **Where does our technology sleep at night?** Agree on a place that your technology can be stored for the night. This could be a central place away from bedrooms. Children's phones should not live in their rooms, but rather a common open space.
- **Where can technology go and not go?** Set boundaries for where technology can be used. We believe technology should not be kept or used behind closed doors or in disconnected spaces without permission.
- **What are no technology times for each member of the family?** Apart from sleep times, there are other times when phones should not distract (meal times, driving, when there is company over). Give them your permission to remind you, just like you will be reminding them.
- **Who knows our passwords?** Parents should have access and control to passwords, apps, and browsing history until their children are adults.
- **How do we handle technology that is owned by other people?** We are committed to engaging in other people's devices with the same guidelines as we have in our home.
 - Additionally, while learning the ropes of technology, we encourage you to set a boundary with your student to stay off of other's personal technology. As time goes on and wisdom is cultivated this is something students can engage in progressively. However, until we have direct conversations with our students' friend's parents we do not know what kind of boundaries or lack thereof may expose our children.

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- **Who is your accountability?** What does that look like? Share with your child who has access to your passwords, apps, and browsing history. Share how you have employed settings on your device to protect yourself.
 - **Are we set up to win?** Research ways to filter and monitor all devices, including those that belong to friends who are visiting.
 - Visit our Technology milestones webpage for further resources

Dear _____ ,

You are growing up in a world full of a lot of possibility! In your life, it looks like you will use technology more and more than any generation that has lived before you. That is a big responsibility and privilege and a huge step toward becoming mature. As your parents we are so excited for you. It's hard for us sometimes to imagine what this world will have to offer you as you grow up. We are committed to making sure we shepherd you to use technology wisely. Technology is a very powerful tool. It can bring a lot of beauty and connection but also a lot of destruction and disconnection. That is why it is important for us to share with you how we want you to respect this opportunity.

As we consider devices, games and apps, we will use the words "now", "later", and "not wise". There will be lots of things that are available to you now. But there will also be things we will decide are for later. This just means you will have to show responsibility and good judgment in some of the "now" things in order to be able to do some of the "later" things. Some things are just "not wise", which will be hard because we are sure some of your friends might have different options. We don't want to keep you from anything, we want to set you up to have freedom in all things.

We have worked out some boundaries for technology. These are true and apply to any devices that enter our home.

We also want to be sure we are on the same page. All the devices in our home belong to us, as your parents. Whether or not you will be able to use them and how often will be biased on trust and wisdom. When you follow the guidelines, you are building trust. When you do it with a tender heart, we can see your maturity growing. Trust and maturity lead to more freedom.

As your parents we love you so much and we are so proud of you. We are so excited for your future and we know we are building into that even now. We know you have what it takes to use technology in a life giving way.

Love,

FAMILY TECHNOLOGY AGREEMENT

Hooray! We know using technology is a big deal and that it is important to you. We think you are ready for this next big step. We have talked about the beauty and the danger. We want to keep you safe, so let's agree on some guidelines for technology.

Please initial and read each item so we know you agree. We will initial them too. This will be kept _____

So you can look at it whenever you need to.

- I understand that how I treat my family and others is more important than screen time
- I will choose to honor any person who is in front of me by putting my device away and giving them my full attention when they are talking
- I understand that I am only allowed to use technology in common rooms of our home (kitchen, living room, etc) where others can see what I am doing. I will not use technology in the bedroom without permission.
- I understand that to keep me safe, there will be filters on my internet access.
- If I see or hear something inappropriate, I will tell my parents. I will never get in trouble for something sent to me as long as I tell an adult within 24 hours.
- I understand that my parents must approve any new games, apps, or websites I visit, whether I am at home or anywhere else.
- I can not delete apps without permission.
- I can not delete texts without permission.
- If I feel worried, scared, confused or unsure about anything, I will talk to my parents about it.
- I will honor others when playing games with friends online. I will treat others the way I want to be treated.

- I will not be able to spend time building my digital world until I am present and engaged in my real life world.
- I understand that I am allowed _____ amount of time on my devices. I will be gentle and kind when my time is up.
- I will not create accounts or share any private information, such as my name, birthday, address, phone number, school, or any photos of myself, friends, or family.
I will not communicate with anyone online that I do not personally know in real life.
- I will get permission from my parents for every new person I add to my contacts and communicate with.
- I understand that my parents will research the games, apps, and websites I am interested in so we can have a conversation about whether or not they are appropriate for me.
- I understand my parents have the freedom to read through my texts, messages, and online content without first asking.

In addition.....

Child Signature

Parent Signature (s)

VILLAGE  CHURCH