Raising Tech-Ready Kids

A Practical Guide to Digital Literacy at Home

The 5 C's Every Parent Should Know:
Control • Communication • Content • Community • Consciousness

INTRODUCTION
Why Digital Literacy Matters for Families

In the digital age, technology and family life go hand in hand. Families use digital tools to connect, communicate, and manage daily life, and children are growing up immersed in screens in ways other generations never experienced. As a result, many parents understandably worry about how constant access to technology is shaping their children's development, relationships, and well-being.

With technology so deeply embedded in everyday routines, parents play an essential role in helping children navigate this environment with confidence and care. This is where digital literacy skills come in. Digital literacy is "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills" (American Library Association). These skills help young people think critically, make thoughtful choices, and engage online safely and responsibly, while helping families build healthier, more balanced digital habits together.

Digital life changes quickly, and every young person's needs are different. Whether your child is 6 or 16, you want to be prepared to support them as they navigate the online world. That's why we created this resource: to offer parents a clear, practical starting point grounded in five key areas of digital literacy to focus on at home: Control, Communication, Content, Community, and Consciousness.

01 Control
Supporting Healthy Boundaries in an Uncontrollable Online World

The Challenge

You can't fully control what your child sees or experiences online, and the digital environment is simply too large, too fast, and too accessible to regulate perfectly, leaving many parents feeling anxious or unsure how to keep their children safe. It's hard to stay on top of who your child follows, what content they encounter, or what access they have when they're outside your home. Even with parental controls, the internet still exposes young people to pressures such as oversharing, unrealistic expectations, and contact from people or content you wouldn't choose for them. These realities can leave parents feeling outmatched and uncertain about how to support their children's digital well-being.

What You Can Do

What you can do is strengthen your child's digital literacy skills so they can navigate the online world with you as their guide. Parental controls can support you, but they don't replace consistent guidance. You still need to teach your child what healthy online behavior looks like, how to recognize unsafe interactions, and why privacy matters. This starts with parents who model healthy digital habits and make their own thoughtful choices. By showing them how you think critically about your online activities, you are helping them do the same whether at home or with their friends. Remind them they can always come to you if something feels uncomfortable or confusing.

Try This at Home

- ☑ Create one **shared family rule** everyone follows (e.g., no phones in bedrooms overnight).
- ☑ Do a monthly "**device clean-up**" together (notifications, privacy settings, old accounts).
- ☑ Narrate your own **healthy tech choices** aloud ("I'm putting my phone away because I want to focus on you").

Conversation Starter
"Were there times when your device or media distracted you this week?"

Conversation Starter
"Is there anything you wish you saw more or less of when you're online?"

Conversation Starter
"Do you feel in control of your online experience? What would help?"

02 Communication
Making Tech an Open Conversation, Not a Taboo Topic

The Challenge

Many parents feel unsure about how to begin conversations about online life, especially since every child has a different personality and evolving needs. It is difficult to know what to say or when to step in when something seems off. Some parents may struggle to talk about online safety and digital behavior in a way that is constructive rather than judgmental. The challenge is creating a space where technology is something everyone can talk about openly. Your child needs to feel safe sharing their online experiences without worrying about being criticized or punished.

What You Can Do

Parents can support their children by being curious and open. Ask questions about what your child enjoys online and what they're learning or seeing. Commit to learning alongside them rather than lecturing. Digital literacy is not a one-size-fits-all journey, so make sure conversations focus on your family's needs. Make talking about technology and media something you do often as a family because it's a big part of everyone's lives. Be clear about your expectations and guidelines, but most importantly, keep the dialogue going about their digital lives. This approach builds a safe space where your child knows they can come to you and that you're in it together.

Try This at Home

- ☑ Set a weekly **"tech check-in"** during dinner or a car ride (e.g., what do they enjoy, what are they seeing).
- ☑ Ask your child to **teach you one thing** they enjoy online each week.
- ☑ Use **real-life events, news, or trending videos** as conversation openers.

Conversation Starter
"Are there any online trends that made you laugh or smile this week?"

Conversation Starter
"Is there anything online that feels confusing or stressful lately?"

Conversation Starter
"If you could redesign social media for teens, what would you change?"

03 Content
Focusing on How Children Spend Their Time Online

The Challenge

As children increasingly use technology, it's important not only to consider how much time they spend on screens but also the quality of what they consume. It can be difficult to tell whether a video, game, or app will have a positive impact or expose them to ideas and interactions they're not yet ready to process. Not all media content is equal, so ensuring they consume quality content is important. It can also be hard to ensure children aren't spending too much time on screens, as research shows that it can be detrimental to a child's mental health and development. Parents often feel overwhelmed by the challenge of determining what is appropriate and how much is too much.

What You Can Do

Help your child develop a healthy media diet. Encourage content that educates, inspires, or sparks imagination. Limit content that feels inappropriate or upsetting. Parents can model thoughtful content choices in their own tech use, including when to take a break. Make media a shared experience when possible. Watch a show together, play games, or share videos you think your child would enjoy. Take media breaks together by finding screen-free activities for the family. Show your child how to maintain a balanced, intentional relationship with media.

Try This at Home

- ☑ Make media **co-viewing** (movies, videos, podcasts) a weekly family ritual.
- ☑ With your teen, do a "**feed refresh**" **together** (e.g., unfollow content that causes stress and add accounts that inspire.
- ☑ For your teen, create a **shared "posting pause"** rule (e.g., wait 10 minutes before posting.

Conversation Starter
"What type of content makes you feel good? What makes you feel not so great?"

Conversation Starter
"Do you ever feel pressure to post about or respond to something?"

Conversation Starter
"If someone looked at your online profile, what would they think about you?"

04 Community
Helping Children Build Safe and Supportive Online Relationships

The Challenge

Young people build friendships and identity online, but they may also encounter negative experiences. Parents often don't know when or how to step in. While young people can form meaningful online communities, they can also face pressure and hurtful behavior. Many parents find it challenging to know how to prepare their children for uncomfortable situations. Online connections require guidance, awareness, and attention to privacy and safety.

What You Can Do

Parents can stay engaged with who their child is interacting with and help them develop digital citizenship skills. Set clear expectations for how they communicate online, including kindness, boundaries, and thinking before responding. Emphasize the importance of privacy and protecting personal information. Talk openly about the realities of bullying or uncomfortable interactions. Prepare them with strategies for what to do if something feels unsafe. Help them identify healthy online communities, monitor their emerging relationships, and build rules together that promote positive, supportive connections.

Try This at Home

- ☑ Review **privacy settings** together every month.
- ☑ **Brainstorm together** what a "healthy online friendship" looks like.
- ☑ Teach your child **how to block, report, and disengage** safely.

Conversation Starter
"Who online makes you feel supported or included?"

Conversation Starter
"Have you ever seen someone being mistreated online? How did it make you feel?"

Conversation Starter
"What would you do if someone online made you feel uncomfortable?"

05 Consciousness
Building Self-Awareness and Mindfulness Around Technology

The Challenge

Children's moods, identities, and beliefs are influenced by the digital content they consume, yet parents can struggle to support healthy tech habits. Many parents worry about how to help their children develop a mindful, balanced relationship with media, especially if they struggle to balance their own media use. It can be hard to keep up with changes in technology and shifts in your child's needs as they grow older. It is challenging to model the balance we hope our kids will develop when we are learning as we go, too.

What You Can Do

Parents can support mindfulness by modeling intentional media use. Help your child reflect on how digital content affects their emotions, choices, and self-perception. Pay attention to your child's mood before, during, and after tech use. Use those observations to guide conversations that promote emotional well-being. Encourage them to think critically about how digital platforms influence what they see and create. Make space in daily life for offline activities that ground and balance them. By setting an example, showing intentional consumption, pausing when tech feels overwhelming, and adjusting your own habits, you help your child build a healthier, more thoughtful relationship with technology.

Try This at Home

- ☑ Model a "**mood check-in**" before and after using a favorite app.
- ☑ Create consistent **screen-free routines** (e.g., meals, morning time, bedtime).
- ☑ **Model pausing or taking breaks** when tech feels overwhelming.

Conversation Starter
"How do you feel after scrolling for a while?"

Conversation Starter
"Are there any online messages or trends that don't feel realistic?"

Conversation Starter
"What helps you reset when digital life feels too loud?"

Digital Literacy at Home:
A Quick Checklist

Healthy Habits
- We have clear expectations about tech use.
- I model healthy tech behavior.
- My child knows they can come to me when something feels wrong.
- We talk regularly about their online experiences.

Content Awareness
- We discuss how content affects mood and self-image.
- We regularly refresh or curate feeds.
- My child understands privacy and the long-term consequences of posting.

Social Well-being
- I stay aware of my child's online communities.
- We talk openly about bullying, boundaries, and kindness.
- My child knows how to block, report, and seek help.

Mindfulness & Balance
- We have screen-free routines.
- We check in about emotions connected to tech use.
- We balance online and offline activities.

Final Thoughts

You don't need to know everything about technology to support your child at every age. You simply need to **stay engaged**, **stay curious,** and **stay connected**. Digital literacy grows through everyday conversations, and you and your child can learn together.

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