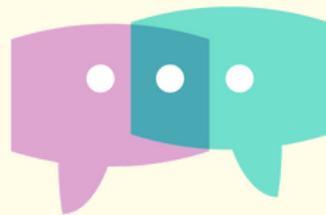


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# Back-to-School Family Media Reset





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# Back-to-School Family Media Reset

Summer looks different for every family. Some have spent more time unplugged and outdoors. For others, juggling camps, care schedules, or long stretches of free time has meant more screen time. No matter what your summer looked like, the start of the school year is a great opportunity to reflect and reset routines for the year ahead.

## Why now?

Transitions are a “window of opportunity” for kickstarting new habits. Because so much is already shifting, it’s easier to introduce new screen time agreements now than to wait and make changes once routines are firmly in place. Let’s take advantage of the “fresh start” effect - a motivational boost that comes with new beginnings - and use this moment as a chance to try something new or renew.

## What this is not:

Back-to-school season isn’t a green light to overhaul everything or impose a laundry list of tech rules. If kids feel like a transition is just a sneaky way for adults to tighten control, they’re likely to disengage. Real change happens through connection and shared rule-making, not just restriction and control.

## What this is:

This reset is a valuable opportunity to kickstart new habits and revisit family tech agreements. The goal isn’t to create a new rule for everything that might go wrong. The goal is to set clear and purposeful boundaries while leaving room for discussion and negotiation. The ongoing conversations you have with your kids are just as important as the rules you agree on.

Warm  
reminder:

While it’s easy to focus on screen time, research shows that what really matters is more complex. The quality of content, the context of use, your child’s coping strategies, and their unique strengths and vulnerabilities all shape outcomes. Media agreements will evolve as kids grow and their digital worlds expand but at every age, children benefit from agreements that go beyond time limits alone.

[www.sparkandstitchinstitute.com](http://www.sparkandstitchinstitute.com)

# Parent Reflection

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Before diving into a conversation about family tech agreements for the school year, take a moment to reflect and name your priorities. The most effective agreements are those that are tailored to your family's needs and attuned to your child's unique strengths and challenges.

Try to avoid doing this reflection in the heat of a screen time power struggle or after a particularly tough day. In those moments, it's easy to fall into all-or-nothing thinking ("They never listen" or "Once the school year starts there will be no more video games ever again!"). Instead, step back and consider your child's patterns over time. This helps us identify our real strengths and priorities.

## What's going well?

This could include technology-related habits such as like boundaries that are working or skills your child is using with screens. It could also include other positive patterns you've noticed, such as, "My child is playing outside every day" or "My child plays collaborative games with good friends." Taking stock of what's going well roots your family tech conversations in strengths.

## What's been most challenging?

Be as specific as possible. For example, it's more helpful to note, "My child keeps their device in their room overnight, and I'm concerned about their sleep," than to say, "They're on screens too much." Clear observations make it easier to avoid power struggles and identify meaningful next steps.

# Name your priorities

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It can be tempting to overhaul everything at once. But research shows it's far more effective to focus on just one to three top priorities. When we try to enforce too many rules, it's overwhelming and can make it harder to follow through. A few clear, purposeful boundaries give kids the structure they need while leaving room for flexibility and collaboration in other areas.

## What areas matter most to you right now?

Start by circling 2-3 areas you'd like to focus on. These can help guide tech agreements that reflect your family's current needs.

Sleep	Focus/Study Habits	Physical Activity	Family Connection Offline	
Peer Connection Offline	Downtime	Media Content	Family Contribution	Reading
Online Interactions	Tech Transitions			

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## What are 1-3 new or renewed boundaries or expectations that will be non-negotiable this year?

Focus on specific, clear expectations that match your top priorities. For example:

- "No devices in bedrooms overnight"
- "Check with me before downloading new apps or games"
- "Phones/Tablet goes in the kitchen basket during homework"
- "We go outside or move our bodies every single day"

## What skills will my child need to practice to be successful?

List internal skills that your child will need to build or practice to be successful. For example, "Relaxation strategies at bedtime" or "Breaking tasks into smaller chunks to help with focused attention."

# Family Agreements

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Prepare for the school year with a screen time reset conversation.

## Get curious.

Curious questions give kids a change to share their thoughts and observations as you plan for what's next. Try asking questions like:

- What do you hope we keep doing this school year that we've been doing this summer?
- What do you think you might need to change related to technology when school starts? Why?
- What do you wish we better understood about how you use tech?
- What do you think the adults will need to change related to tech use when school starts?

## Set expectations.

You might say something like, "With the school year starting, it's a good time to try out a few new routines to set us up for success. My job as your parent is to help you stay safe and healthy, so I do have a few non-negotiable boundaries. But beyond that, I want to hear your ideas and work together to find what works best for all of us."

## Invite ideas.

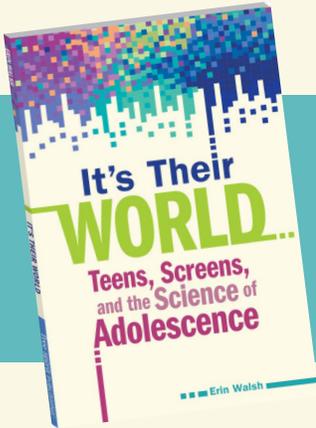
You might say something like, "You know what it takes to get through a school day and focus on the things that matter most to you. What kinds of agreements do you think would help support you this year?"

## Share your non-negotiables.

Share the boundary and the purpose behind it. For example, "Sleep is the main way we recharge our brains and our bodies. My expectation is that we keep devices out of our sleeping areas overnight. How does that sound? Anything we can do to make this more successful?"

## Make agreements.

You might choose to write your agreements down so you can return to them later. Make sure to include your kid's ideas too. Start with a few meaningful changes, then revisit and adjust as the weeks go on. Once a new routine becomes a habit, it's much easier to take on other priorities.



But what about body image, social media, over-use and more? This short resource can't cover it all. For a compassionate and practical guide to all things tweens, teens, and screens, order "It's Their World" wherever you buy books including [bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org), [Barnes & Noble](http://Barnes & Noble), and [Amazon](http://Amazon).



**There are as many strong opinions about kids and phones as there are kids and parents. This guide will help you:**

- Move away from the idea that allowing any amount of technology is somehow "failing" as a parent.
- Slow down and think twice before delivering more technology than is healthy or needed.

**Click on the links for more resources!**

