

# Technology Agreements

## Creating Healthy Environments for the Home and Beyond

This guide is a tool to help assess one's technology use and create boundaries for healthy digital environments. For additional resources visit online at [SmithCoaching.com/resources](http://SmithCoaching.com/resources)

“Technology is neither good nor bad, nor is it neutral.”

~ Melvin Kranzberg

Technology is amoral and its power for good or bad is left in the hands of the user. Take a brick for example. A brick can be used to build a bridge or a home, but it can also be used to break a window or injure a living thing. The brick is amoral and only becomes “good or bad” based on how it is used. Technology is the same. Will technology be healthy or harmful for you and your loved ones...it's up to you.

### The 3-Es to clarifying and defining one's technological context.

#### Step One: **EXPLORE**

- Take inventory of the technology that is a part of your life or a family member's life. (phone, TV, computer, Xbox, movies, etc.)
- Categorize the technology (work, pleasure, education, etc.). Ask the question, “Why am I truly using this technology?”
- List the amount of time you spend on each piece of technology. If your technology is used for multiple categories, then split it up accordingly. (Ex. Phone = 2 hours pleasure and 1 hour of work/school)
- Calculate the total amount of time you spend in each category.

#### Step Two: **EXPECTATIONS**

- Use these 20 questions to help define expectations and boundaries.
  1. What values and beliefs do we hold that will shape our boundaries?
  2. What technologies are allowed to be used and by whom?
  3. What are healthy time limits for technology use?
  4. Where can technology be used and not used?
  5. What technology requires passwords and who should and should not have them?
  6. Who “owns” the technology and has the authority to use it?
  7. Who pays for the technology if it gets damaged?
  8. When is technology to be left behind, shut off, or silenced?
  9. What is the ideal vision or expectation for each technology being used?

10. Is technology a privilege or a necessity, and what responsibilities must be completed before technology is enjoyed?
  11. Will this technology bring more struggle than joy to our household?
  12. What technology etiquette is expected?
  13. What steps should be taken if technology is having a negative effect on one's life?
  14. How can we use technology to make a positive difference in the world?
  15. Do the tech rules in your house apply to parent(s) as well as kid(s)?
  16. Who is allowed to make online purchases and downloads?
  17. How will we hold each person accountable to the boundaries?
  18. Are there incentives for making continual healthy-tech decisions?
  19. What are the consequences if the boundaries are broken?
  20. Has each person had input into setting the boundaries?
- For each technology listed in Step One write out an expectation for its ideal and appropriate use.
    - Include time limits, healthy use boundaries, etc.
    - Be clear, specific, and realistic with your expectations.
  - Place your written expectations in a location where you will see them daily.
  - You may consider including consequences if the expectations are not followed.
  - Examples of simple and short expectations:
    - Xbox may be played for up to 1 hour on weekdays only after all homework/responsibilities are completed. It may be played on the weekend for a maximum of 5 hours and must be turned off one hour before bedtime. Only games that have our parental approval may be played.
    - TV (Youtube, NetFlix, Prime, Hulu, etc) may be watched for 30 minutes on weekdays, and a maximum of 5 hours on weekends. All screen must be turned off one hour before bedtime. Shows should be appropriate for your age. If the expectations are not followed you will lose the privilege for watching TV for one week.
  - For a more detailed example see the attached "Cell Phone Agreement" used by the Smith family.

### Step Three: **EVALUATE**

- Schedule regular times to evaluate the expectations. A simple "check-in" each week may be all you need or a longer tech-talk every other week may be best. Do what works best for your home.
- Don't wait for a crisis or struggle to occur before evaluating your technology expectations. Offer support and praise and keep the technology communication alive and healthy.
- Adapt the expectations accordingly and always know the "why" behind the expectations.

Below is the Smith family cell phone agreement. It can be downloaded online as a PDF/Word/Pages document at [www.SmithCoaching.com/resources](http://www.SmithCoaching.com/resources).

### **CELL PHONE AGREEMENT**

Congratulations! You have shown yourself to be responsible enough for your own cell phone. Having a phone is a big responsibility and as your parents we want to help you to become a well-rounded person who can co-exist with technology, rather than be pulled by it.

If used correctly, a cell phone can be a wonderful tool for positive communication, research, personal growth, and enjoyment. If used wrongly, it can hurt others, put your safety at risk and be a detriment to your personal growth. For this reason, there are certain expectations that must be followed in order to maintain your use of a cell phone.

You have always been a great kid and we want to make sure that you continue to make good choices. As you take on more independence as a cell phone user and begin to communicate with more people over various mediums, please keep in mind Ephesians 4:29.

*Don't let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is **helpful** when it is needed for **building up** the community so that it **benefits** those who hear what you say.*

This one verse offers three important parts to healthy communication. First, is the idea that if you don't have something good to say, don't say it at all. If your communication is unwholesome, mean or in any way not helpful, simply don't say it. Second, your communication should build others up according to their needs. Every person has needs and our conversations should work to support the positive needs of others. Third, your conversations should be beneficial to the listener. There may be times that difficult things need to be communicated, but it should be done with truth and love.

Keep these three simple questions in mind as you communicate with others:

1. Is what I'm saying helpful?
2. Is what I'm saying building others up?
3. Is what I'm saying beneficial to the listener?

The goal of this agreement is to make sure that you are maturing as a responsible adult - and that we always maintain a direct and open line of communication. We are asking you to always use your phone for good and to ask for help from us or a trusted adult when a situation leaves you feeling scared or unsure.

We Love You!

1. I promise that my parents will always know my phone passwords. I understand that my parents have a right to look at my phone whenever there's a need for them to do so, even without my permission. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
2. I will keep my phone password protected and not allow anyone to use my phone without my direct supervision. I am responsible for anyone else's behavior while they are using my phone. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
3. I will not send or receive any provocative images or messages; ever. I understand that there could be serious legal consequences that could put mine and my parents' future at risk. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
4. I understand that my behavior on my phone can impact my future reputation—even in ways that I am not able to predict or see. I will consider future consequences when making present moment decisions. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
5. I promise I will tell my parents when I receive suspicious or alarming phone calls or text messages from people I don't know. I will also tell my parents if I am being harassed by someone via my cell phone. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
6. I will make an effort to learn phone and internet etiquette. I understand this is an extension of normal manners. I will silence and put my phone away in public, especially in a restaurant, at the movies, or while speaking with another person. I am not a rude person. I will not allow the phone to change this important part of who I am. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
7. I will never use my phone or social media to bully or tease anyone, even if my friends think it's funny. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
8. I will not lie about where I have been or how I am using the phone. I promise to answer questions openly, honestly, and directly. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
9. I will not have inappropriate music, apps, games, images or anything at all on my phone. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
10. At night I will place my phone on the charger in an area other than my room at the designated time and will not begin to use it again until I am ready to begin the next day. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
11. I understand that as I grow older my phone responsibilities will change, such as not texting while driving, and any will be explained to me. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_
12. I understand the this is not my phone and that it was paid for by my parents. Having this phone is not a right but is a privilege that can be taken away at any time. Initial here: \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that the rules above are for my safety and that my parents love me more than anything in the world. I recognize that my parents want to give me freedom, while also giving me enough security to make smart choices. As such, I have read the following document and agree to the above rules.

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Signature

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Date