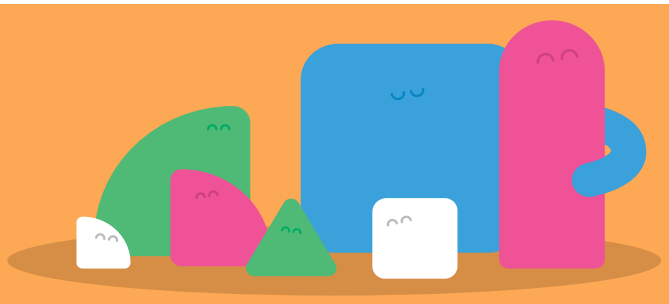
A LUST FOR LIFE



1ST & 2ND CLASS

Parent Support Sheets – Lesson 9: My Time and Screen Time

Lesson Summary:

The aim of this lesson is for children to think about their time online and what they do during 'screen time'. The class collaborates on what the internet is used for in their lives, and what kinds of activities could be done instead of screen time to make them feel healthier. We refer back to what we need to feel well generally (e.g. balance of sleep, play, eating well, exercise and being outside, spending time with friends / family, etc).

Google's 'Be Internet Legends' video is played for the class (see alflschools.com), and children are asked to remember the 5 pillars of the Be Internet Legends Code, including:

- Be Internet **Sharp / Alert / Secure / Kind / Brave**

Try It At Home Activity: 'My Screen Time'

In the 'My Screen Time' activity, children are asked to write or draw what they do on the internet on page 1. On page 2, they are asked for some ideas for activities they can do without screen time. Of course, screen time is not inherently bad. Children access screens for leisure time, they sometimes work with and create with screens in school, and technology can facilitate communication with friends, family and relatives abroad. However, it is important that children do not spend too much time on screens, and for them to become aware of how they feel if they spend too much time watching television or playing with a tablet (e.g. lack of energy, trouble sleeping, more family fights, may find normal life a bit boring).

Scan here for 'Try it at Home' activities!

If you have time, check out these two Additional Activities from the 'Be Internet legends' online safety resource:

Watch the Legends Family Adventure: Watch three short films, made with Aardman Animations, which follow a family as they go on an adventure in Interland. **Click here**.

Play Interland: Explore the themes covered in the lessons and Legends Code video, with four levels to explore. **Click here**.

Colour in your own Internaut! Print out the Be Internet Legends Activity Sheet. **Click here**.

Dr. Malie's Top Tips:

Most children love screen time (as do adults!). As parents, we all struggle getting our children off their screens. When you think about the role of screen time in your child's life, rather than counting the amount of hours, it can be helpful to think in terms of your child's overall health and how they spend their time in general. Dr. Anderson, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute, suggests parents use a

'developmental checklist' to consider whether your child is engaged in activities important for healthy development. Try asking yourself:

- Is my child sleeping enough and eating a somewhat balanced diet?
- Are they getting some form of exercise every day?
- Are they spending some quality time with family?
- Do they use some screen time to keep in touch with friends?
- Are they invested in school and keeping up with homework?

If you can answer YES to most of those questions, then it's probably not a problem if your child watches an extra episode of their favourite show. The reverse is also true. If your child is spending so much time gaming that you can't get them to exercise or eat properly, that's a sign that you need to intervene. If the worry is that your child is having too much screen time, it's not about how much time that actually is, it's about what it infringes on.

Following from this, here a few tips on setting healthy boundaries from the same article: https://childmind.org/article/screen-time-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/

- **Start with compassion**. Unstructured screen time can be a source of comfort and entertainment for many kids. Letting your kids know that you understand their needs is a simple way to reduce stress for everyone. You can say to your kids, "Look, I know you need a break. I know you need to relax" and set a limit.
- **Brainstorm alternatives**. When we tell kids not to do something, we almost always need to suggest what to be doing instead. Put together an "activity menu" with a younger child that lists their preferred non-screen activities (like crafts, listening to music, reading or walking the dog). That way, when they're feeling bored or overwhelmed, they'll have easy choices at the ready.
- **Keep a schedule**. It can also be helpful to set specific times of the day or week when your kids know they'll be allowed to use their screens. For instance, maybe the 30 minutes before dinner are always open for screen time or 3 times a week for gaming. That kind of structure helps kids know what to expect and cuts down on their requests for screens at other times.
- **Stay the course**. Once you set up a system, you may find that your kids push back against it. Maybe they'll be moody for the first few days and get angry. That's what's called an extinction burst. It's natural for children to test new boundaries to see if they're firm, but if you can stick to your plan and tolerate their irritation for a few days, pushback will likely fade as kids settle into their new routines.
- **Model healthy screen use**. If you make a point of setting aside your own screens during set times, your children will be more likely to do the same without putting up a fight. Plus, taking breaks from tech has the added benefit of helping you limit your own media intake and giving you moments of mindfulness with your kids.

Resources:

To learn more about online safety, visit the following sources:

- This Irish website has information, advice and free education resources addressing a range of internet safety issues and concerns for young people, teachers and parents: https://www.webwise.ie/
- For child-friendly stories to explain being safe online to children aged 3-7, check out: https://www.childnet.com/resources/digiduck-stories/
- For more information on Google's 'Be Internet Legends', please visit: https://parentzone.org.uk/beinternetlegends