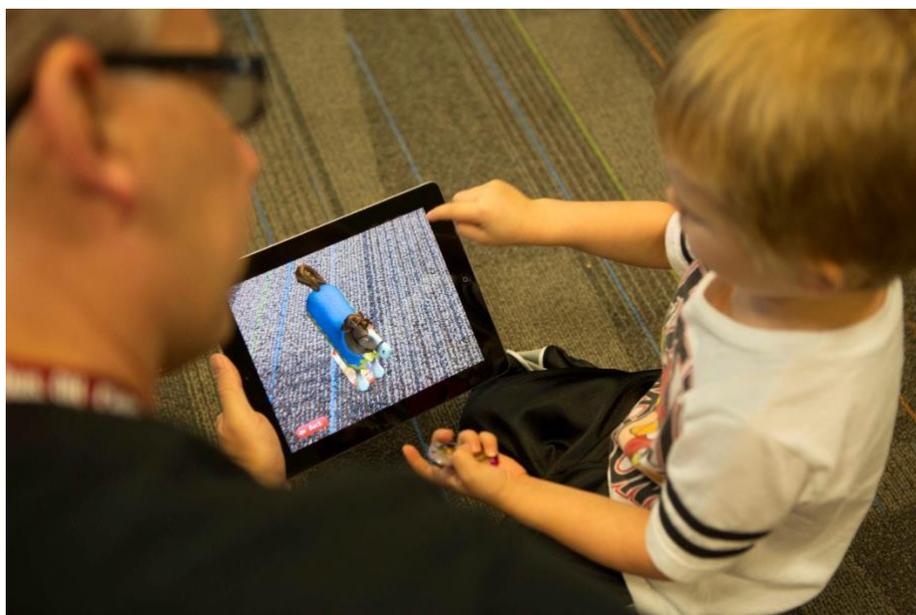


# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



## How to Navigate Media & Technology

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To give you wisdom as you oversee your kids' media "diet."
2. To help your children make good decisions about technology.
3. To remind your family to unplug from media and plug into Jesus and his Word.

Researchers say the average young American spends a majority of every waking minute in front of an electronic device. That means kids are usually plugged in, zoned out, or wired for sound.

Increased screen time leads to physical inactivity, shorter attention spans, and exposure to dangers such as porn. On the positive side, technology has expanded children's knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills. It has also boosted awareness and activism among young citizens. Here are other surprising ways technology is impacting young hearts and minds.

**Shifting relationships** Although children still belong to social groups,

the emphasis is no longer on face-to-face gatherings. Preteens, wired for relationships, now think in terms of their "audience" rather than their peer group.

**Identity development** Children express their developing personalities through social-networking sites and online role-playing. Preteens, emulating "cool," may try to outdo one another with suggestive images.

**TMI missteps** Because kids are still forming judgment and boundaries, they may share too much private info in very public ways. This can have negative long-term consequences.

Read on for practical ideas about harnessing media and technology in your family.

## Becoming Masters of Media

If you aren't very tech-savvy, you may defer to your children as experts when it comes to media. But parents are ultimately responsible for supervising what their kids are exposed to—and for how long. Two keys are moderation and interaction. Experts advise: Keep screens out of bedrooms, and place computers in open areas. Make media time contingent on the completion of chores and homework. Plan alternate activities, including physical ones. Agree on days and times (such as dinner, family night, and Sundays) that are digital-free zones—for adults too. Watch shows and listen to music together. Talk about issues that come up, tying them into faith and a biblical worldview.



### TEACHABLE MOMENTS

#### Listen Up!

Read aloud Exodus 19:1-9, 16-25. Say: **God spoke to Moses in a powerful voice. But most people say they've never heard God speak aloud.** Brainstorm ways God speaks to us today; for example, through the Bible, other Christians, songs, and so on.

Read aloud John 16:13-15. Have family members each take a Bible (or Bible picture book) to a place where they can be alone.

Say: **Pray about school, home, a problem—anything! Open your Bible and ask God to help you hear what he is saying to you.**

After a few minutes, share your experiences. Say: **Sometimes God speaks to us loudly and clearly. Other times, we might not even know God said anything until later. But God is always communicating with us. So keep listening!**

Close in prayer, thanking God for always being “in touch” with us and asking for his help to listen to him.

**The Tech Commandments** When you're establishing rules for media usage, involve children in some of the decisions. Ask them what “commandments” God might have set for online behavior and how we interact with other people using technology. What would God have made off-limits? What would he have encouraged? What age requirements or time limits might he have established, and why?

**The Wired Word** Challenge kids to think how the Bible would be different if technology had existed in Jesus' time. How would a Twitter version of your favorite Scripture verse read? How would you describe one of Jesus' miracles to a friend via text message? If Jesus had a TV ad campaign to recruit followers, what might it look and sound like?

**Who's That?** Talk about ways we get other people's attention these days and how it feels to fail to “connect” with someone. Then play this game to help you think about God's voice. Have family members each think up a line from a movie or TV show. Then take turns saying the line using the same voice as the character. See who can guess the movie or show, as well as the character. Afterward, ask: “How did you recognize the voices and

programs?” Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10. Ask: “Why did it take Samuel awhile to figure out who was talking? What are some ways God gets our attention? How can we recognize God's voice?”

**Say What?** Set out crayons, tape, and three pieces of paper. Say: “Let's try to make the tallest telephone pole we can. But each of us can say only one word to communicate as we work.” Assign each person a nonsense word, such as *booga-booga*, *grunky*, or *yowsa*. Spend five minutes working and using the new language. Afterward, discuss: “What was easy or difficult about this project? What was it like to have language limits while we worked? How is communication a gift from God? How can we make sure we communicate wisely?”

**God Is Listening** Have family members close their eyes and try to identify objects you drop (paper clip, pencil, coin, silverware, plastic cup, ping-pong ball, jingle bell, etc.). Afterward, ask how people knew what the items were. Say: “It's very important to listen closely.” Read aloud Proverbs 2:2. Ask: “What are some ways you can ‘tune your ears to wisdom’ as you make choices about what to watch, play, and listen to?”

“Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”  
—Philippians 4:8, NLT