

Tackling Technology

How to raise kids in a *digital* world



One of our most important parent/caregiver responsibilities is to support our tamariki as they navigate life in a digital world. Starting conversations about healthy tech use, alongside teaching and modelling good digital skills and habits from an early age, can help set our kids up for more positive online experiences and better mental well-being.

1. Be intentional

Take an active approach in your role as your family's tech leader. Just as we teach pre-schoolers to safely cross the road, or assist teenagers to get their driver's licence – parents need to help their kids develop digital skills. Your role is to support them to discover the fun, learning and connection that tech has to offer, while staying safer online and encouraging balance in their digital and real-world spaces. Take time to think about how tech works in your whānau, how it relates to your family values and dynamics, and how your child's individual personality, needs and growing capabilities impact what works. And remember, *it's okay to delay*.

2. Get practical

- **Do a home tech review:** Take the time to educate yourself on the different online devices you have in your home. From Alexa-powered alarm clocks through to TV platform applications, as well as all portable devices including laptops, phones, smart watches and screens in vehicles.
- **Set up filters** on your internet connection and on each device your family members have access to. We recommend [Safe Surfer](#), or check out what filters and settings are available through your internet provider.
- **Use PIN codes and parental controls:** Protect devices and apps with passwords or PIN codes so kids can't access without your okay. Use screen time settings and limit access to content that's age-appropriate on shared family devices. Manage your child's accounts to guide what they can see, set app usage and time limits, control spending and keep an eye on their online activity.

- **Create house rules:** Talk with your kids about what tech values matter to your family. Do you have a gaming night? Do you have screen-free times of day? Maybe before school or after dinner? Are all devices stored and charged in the kitchen? Agree content, locations, time slots and overall time limits. Use [Common Sense Media](#) for age-based reviews and recommendations on popular movies, games, TV shows, apps and more. Make this a 'go-to' for all whānau members.
- **Check your own tech habits:** What are you modelling? Kids learn more from what we do than what we say. Resist oversharing. In this social media world, it's tempting to broadcast your kids' achievements online – make sure you're protecting their privacy too. Consider keeping your accounts private, make sure photos don't contain identifying information like school uniforms, dates of birth, sports team logos or home address details in the background. Teach your kids these same safety habits.
- **Stay informed:** Keep up-to-date by following online safety and digital parenting info through the growing range of podcasts, websites and social accounts to develop your awareness of what might be happening for your kids and what the risks are.

No amount of filters or parental controls can replace having great communication and developing skills and good decision-making in your kids.

3. Keep talking

- **Help your child develop filters in their brain:** Encourage kids to think twice about what they see and remind them that not everything online is right or true. Keep chatting with them so they can get better at knowing what's safe, and what's not.
- **Ask:** Asking great questions in advance about scenarios that could happen can help your child develop critical thinking and good decision-making skills, before any tricky situations arise. We want our tamariki to know they can talk to us about anything.
- **Normalise tech conversations with family and friends:** At playdates, at sleepovers, at grandparent's houses – ask about filters and what movies, games, TV shows or devices kids will have access to. It might feel awkward, but protecting your kid is more important.
- **Stay connected:** Keep conversations open and regular, supporting your child to journey through their digital world with guidance and help. Introduce conversations about body safety and online safety. Nurture a judgement-free relationship where they can ask questions and come to you for help. Be their safe person.

The primary years are a great time to partner with tamariki as they start to experience more digital engagement, and to set your home up to be a safer environment. Help your child create healthy online and real-world habits, provide age-appropriate knowledge and stay curious about what's happening for them in digital spaces. For information on first phones, screen time, parental controls and more, visit parentingplace.nz/digital

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parentingplace.nz/digital-parenting



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