

# Part 2: Managing Technology in the Summer

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Your children's use of technology can support their internet browsing, staying connected through social media, and checking in with you with a cell phone. The wrong kind of use can get in the way of your

children's education and make them more self-centered. Children ages 12 to 18 spend nearly two hours a day texting alone, 8 to 10 year old children average almost 8 hours a day using technology, while those ages 11 to 18 spend more than 11 hours per day (see *Is Technology Harmful to my Kids? What Parents Need to Know* By Joshua Straub, Ph.D.).

When considering these negative outcomes on children, I attempted to limit the use of technology, in particular social media, when I was teaching in my classroom. To keep my students on task, I tried to block social media pages. In one case, when students were using MySpace to investigate other students, I had the website blocked.

These same students, who had been unable to look up information for a research report, however, were savvy enough to access MySpace through a British website. I discovered that it wasn't enough to just block websites, I needed to be physically present, sit with my students at the computer and put limits on computer time using an egg timer or alarm. I also recommended to parents that they become Facebook "friends" of their children in order to both view and advise their children on appropriate postings.

Listed below are some ideas of alternatives to technology that can be used during the summer when the kids are out of school:

Focus on outdoor fun activities.

Make an obstacle course or focus on gross motor activities such as learning how to ride a bicycle.

If affordable, kids can participate in outdoor activity based camps, where they likely do not have technology.

Manage the amount of time spent on technology.

Use technology as a reward or re-enforcement to promote completion of a non-preferred task that is educational.

Review technology use weekly or create your own media agreement (see

[https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/connecting\\_families/family\\_media\\_agreements\\_k-12.pdf](https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/connecting_families/family_media_agreements_k-12.pdf))

Have an array of alternate activities at your fingertips so you don't have to stop and think of a non-technology alternatives during busy times, such as when you are cooking dinner.

Instruct your children to play board games or do fine motor activities. For example, you can encourage siblings to play against each other in a Connect 4 game.

Set up an art cart.

Remember that our children look up to us as role models and teachers. If we don't want our children to become addicted to computers or phones, we cannot spend too much time on them ourselves. Next time you and your family go to a restaurant, a park, or on a family outing, have everyone make note of how many members of other families are simultaneously looking down at their cell phones, listening to music or texting. Then declare a technology free zone by leaving cell phones at home and finding an outdoor setting without a wi-fi connection.

Happy summer play!

Karen

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