



ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - October 2015

This month, we recognised Stay Smart Online Week which aims to encourage all users to be aware of how to manage their privacy in a digital environment and promote good cyber security behaviours. ThinkUKnow is also participating in the 'Capital to the Coast' tour in which the Daniel Morcombe Foundation's 'Big Red' promotional truck will deliver safety presentations to more than 2000 students at 15 schools in the ACT and South Coast Region in the lead up to [Day for Daniel](#).

As we approach Christmas and the new school year, we'll address a few points for parents to consider before purchasing devices for their children, either for personal use or for BYOD school programs, in this newsletter.

What capabilities are required?

When choosing the device for your child, have a look at the capabilities built in and whether you can disable any of these. Your school will provide a list of software or operating system requirements as part of their BYOD program, but you may wish to disable other features or purchase a device with limited capabilities. Some parents choose to disable the camera functionality on some tablets or laptops for their younger children; others restrict the functions of smartphones to simply calling and texting. As a family, you'll need to decide what features are required and whether the device you are purchasing allows you to disable other features. Not all devices allow certain features to be deactivated so it is best to speak to the sales representative or visit the product's website before purchasing an item.

Not all digital literacy learning happens at school

You might see a laptop or tablet as a tool for schoolwork and homework, but your child will likely view them as tools for playing games, watching videos and communicating with friends. While their primary purpose may be for schooling, the activities your child undertakes on these devices may also help them to learn critical digital literacy skills. As they communicate with friends and, at times,

Time2Talk

In this section we look at ways to start talking with children and young people about their use of technology.

What functions do you need in a device for learning, and which ones do you want for play?

Who do you learn about cyber safety and security from?

How should you split your digital time between work and play?

Who is responsible for what happens on your phones, tablet, device?

strangers, they will learn crucial skills around relationship and reputation management. Viewing, creating and sharing content online will also assist them in learning about digital ownership rights, evaluating the value of content viewed and privacy management.

Balancing these activities, however, is important. Helping your child to structure the time spent doing school work and time spent socialising online, as well as time spent away from a screen, can assist them in maintaining a healthy digital diet. Allocating time for each activity can help your child establish a routine and, as their needs change as they get older, you can adapt these routines together.

Parents as teachers

We often hear parents voicing concerns about how they can manage their child's use of their device when at home. As discussed above, much of a child's digital learning is likely to happen in informal settings when at home. This doesn't need to be a cause for alarm, but an opportunity to re-evaluate how cyber safety and security are addressed in the home. Each family will have different needs, but we recommend the following steps:

Talk about ethical decision-making

Actively and continually talking about the safe and ethical use of technology must be the first step. Ensuring your child knows that you wish to play an active role in their digital activities and you are there to assist them if something goes wrong can encourage a more open dialogue around technology. Discussing strategies to overcome scenarios or working through actual online conflicts or upsetting content can help your child feel more prepared for their digital life, and give them skills they can use even when a parent or teacher isn't around to assist them.

Keep devices in family areas where possible or the bedroom door stays open

Many Australian households no longer own a family computer, instead utilising laptops and tablets connected to a wireless router. This makes it much more difficult to restrict internet access by children and young people to devices always within view of a parent. Where possible, the use of portable devices in family areas of the home is encouraged, but if they are being used in bedrooms we would recommend that the door remains open. This allows a parent to pop their head in and make sure everything is alright, but also reminds the child that there are people around to help if something does go wrong.

Bedtime for devices

As discussed in other e-newsletters, having a bedtime for devices at least half an hour before the child goes to bed can help them to switch off and get the deep, uninterrupted sleep they need to develop and rest. The earlier you start this with your child the easier it will be.

Family Internet Safety Contract

If you haven't already developed a Family Internet Safety Contract, you may wish to do so. It is a valuable tool which outlines the rules and boundaries for internet use in your home. Include as much information as possible about your expectations around time, safety, security, supervision,

behaviour and consequences. Visit the [ThinkUKnow website](#) for these resources.

