



Developmental Guide for Healthy Technology Use

We compare social media readiness to earning a driver's licence. Just as young people must undergo training and demonstrate responsibility before driving, social media requires readiness and preparation. Parents should provide hands on guidance during early adolescence (10–15 years-old), teaching teens the skills they need to navigate digital spaces safely and meaningfully.

Foundations for Healthy Development

AGES 5–7:

- recommend no smartphones and social media;
- explore positive, age-appropriate content together;
- prioritise unstructured play, face-to-face time, and sleep;
- model healthy technology use.

Grow Digital Awareness

AGES 8–12:

- delay smartphones and social media;
- use parental controls and supervise content;
- talk regularly about safe, respectful technology use;
- keep devices out of bedrooms and before bed;
- encourage maximising in-person activities, exercise, sleep, and creativity;
- introduce positive online content which supports learning and interests.

Support Independent Use

AGES 16+:

- allow independent social media use with limits;
- encourage self-monitoring and reflection;
- keep communication open;
- prioritise real-life relationships, physical activity and sleep;
- support discernment in choosing content which aligns with values and goals.

Guided Introduction to Smartphones and Social Media

AGES 13–15:

- introduce smartphones with clear boundaries;
- slowly introduce social media with a shared family agreement and ongoing guidance and supervision;
- maintain screen-free sleep routines and offline balance;
- engage with content together and keep dialogue open;
- support critical thinking, emotional regulation and digital literacy;
- encourage following creators and platforms which inspire, educate, or uplift.

St Andrew's College Philosophy on Technology Use

Keep communication open

Foster regular, non-judgemental conversations so your child feels safe to share their online experiences. Adolescents are motivated by status and respect.

Set clear, shared boundaries

Agree on expectations together through a digital contract. Establish screen-free times and places, such as during meals or before bed.

Model healthy habits

Children notice what we do. Aim to demonstrate balanced, intentional technology use in your own life.

Stay involved and aware

Take an active, ongoing interest in your child's digital life.

Encourage balance

Support a mix of activities, including hobbies, sport, time outdoors, and face-to-face connections.