

## Parent-Family Tips-Monitoring Internet Usage, Video Gaming, and TV Watching

On average, many children spend far more time interacting with the Internet, playing video games, or watching TV than they do completing homework or other school-related activities.

The following are some suggestions for helping your child to use time wisely and support learning:

- Set limitations for viewing and interacting with the Internet, playing video games, and watching TV. Too much of these can cut into important activities in a child's life, such as reading, completing homework, playing with friends, and talking with family members.
- Model good viewing habits. Parents-Families are role models, and your children look up to you. Children who live in homes in which parents and other family members have "quiet" time away from the Internet, video games, and TV where they read (either alone or to each other), talk to each other, play collaborative games, or engage in other activities tend to do the same.
- Watch or spend time online with your child when you can. Talk with your child about what you see. Provide guidance and correct information when you see something is incorrect or does not make sense. Make alternate selections or turn off when offensive and/or concerning.
- When you can't watch with your child, spot check to see what's being viewed. Ask questions after the program or game ends. Provide guidance as necessary in making good choices. Some Internet, games, and TV programming can be positive and support learning, others do not. Help your child recognize the difference. Pay particular attention to any games your child might download or copy from the Internet. Some games are violent or contain content that is entirely inappropriate for children.
- Talk to your child about Internet safety and security in advance of its use.
- Learn along with your child. If you're not familiar with computers or with the Internet, ask the librarian if and when someone is available at the library to help you and your child learn together to use them. If your child knows about computers, let her/him teach you. Ask your child to explain what is being done and why.
- Ask your child to show you her/his favorite websites and to tell you about them. This will help to build self-confidence and pride in her/his ability to teach as well.
- Help your child to locate appropriate Internet websites. Make sure that your child understands what you think are appropriate websites. Help your child find safe sites that can help with homework or that relate to interests. Resources such as GetNetWise

(<http://www.getnetwise.org/>), a public service provided by Internet corporations and public interest groups and Families Connect (<http://www.ala.org/ICONN/familiesconnect.html>), a service of the American Library Association, can help you to make good website choices and give you more information about Internet use.

- Consider using “filters” to block your child from accessing sites that may be inappropriate or unsafe. These filters include software programs that you can install on your computer. In addition, many Internet service providers offer filters (often for free) that restrict the sites that children can visit. Please know these filters are not always completely effective, and children can find ways to navigate around them. The best safeguard is your supervision and involvement.
- Teach your child rules for using the Internet safely. Let your child know that she/he should never do the following: share computer password, use offensive language or send cruel, threatening, or untrue messages, give out any personal information to strangers which includes name or the names of family members, home address, phone number, age, or school name, or arrange to meet a stranger that he/she has talked with in an online “chat room” as people have often been found to misrepresent themselves.

Remember your learning, teaching, supervision, and monitoring are important.