

Technology and Social Media

With teens spending so much of their time online, how can parents effectively monitor their teens' technology habits? One thing's for sure: your teen will always be one step ahead. That's why you need to understand the basics of technology.

Online Media

While there are safe websites, there are also many that contain messages harmful to youth – messages about drugs, alcohol, body image, sex, and violence.

- **Talk to your kids** about expectations around sex and drug use. Otherwise, they will learn from the media and Internet, which makes dressing sexy, experimenting with alcohol and drugs, and casual hook-ups seem like the norm.

Social Networking Sites

MySpace and Facebook are teens' favorite websites, and they allow them to stay in constant touch with their friends and others. You can help kids use these sites safely by:

- **Talking to your kids** about being on a social networking site and how they represent themselves. Make it clear that any information, photos, and videos they post are open for the world to see.
- **Reviewing** your teen's profile together and making this a regular activity so they aren't tempted to add inappropriate content.
- **Being consistent** with setting rules and consequences pertaining to alcohol and substance abuse references on your teen's social networking pages.

Cell Phones

Nearly 7 in 10 teens have mobile phones. Tips for dealing with being connected 24-7:

- **Establish rules** for when teens can use their cell phones and **tell your teen** that you'll be checking their text messages and calls for any unknown numbers.
- **Make sure** your teen is aware of safety issues, like never driving and using the cell phone at the same time.
- **Discuss the consequences** of taking cell phone snapshots and circulating those photos with friends or on the Internet. Seemingly innocent pictures can quickly become public property and even legal nightmares.

Helpful Resources:

<http://youthmedianetwork.com/>

<http://www.socialbrite.org/2009/07/31/empowering-youth-with-social-media/>