

- Also explain that this is a particularly difficult emotional period for many children and what may seem to be harmless teasing, can be devastating to the person being teased.
- Share with them that the Internet is a public forum so anything can be shared with other people without their knowledge or consent. They should be very discreet in what they say and do on-line. They need to always be vigilant in protecting their reputations. Things said and done on the internet can come back to bite them many years later.
- Have a very pointed conversation about “sexting”, the risky practice of sending sexually explicit photos and/or messages which can easily be forwarded on to others and damage their reputation.

Establish clear and enforceable guidelines:

- Establish your own family policy for acceptable technology use. List what may or may not be allowed including clear rules about time limits.
- Be upfront with your child, that this policy will be enforced and monitored. Try to set a policy that respects your child’s privacy while also considering their age, maturity level and inclination towards risky behavior.
- Purchase monitoring / time control software to help enforce your family's policy.
 - Search “parental control software reviews” to find the latest products, features, and reviews.
- Do not allow a computer to be in a child's bedroom. Keep it in a public area such as the kitchen or den.

How much technology and access does your child really need?

- Does a middle school child or younger possess the maturity, judgment, and social skills to use text messaging and social websites responsibly? Do their peers?
- Does your child really need a cell phone, particularly with text messaging and/or photo/video features? Are they mature enough to handle these options responsibly?
- When does too much technology begin to hurt a child? You need to find the right balance with other activities.
- Is it healthy for them to come home and plug right back into their social network versus having some quiet, reflective and regenerative time with their family?

Please visit <http://www.RyanPatrickHalligan.org> for more information about these topics and to also learn more about bullying and teen suicide prevention.