

***Screen Time Guidelines for Parents, Caregivers, Educators, and Coaches***  
***Cindy Pierce - 2026***

***Screen time suggestions for parents and caregivers:***

- No phone zones for kids **and adults** (car, at the table, in the bedroom)
- Establish unplugged times and spaces (adults and kids)
- Limit multiple screens (watching a show and checking social media)
- Homework and screen time in a common area rather than in their room
- Kids contribute to the monthly payment for the phone – earn money around the house
- Required viewing of your choice before they can have a phone (“Yes, as soon as...”)
- The Social Dilemma* and *Our Kids Online* – for parents and older kids
- Filters give a false sense of safety – have challenging conversations, establish limits *and* use filters
- Be vigilant about screen-time conversations and support building independence skills offline

***First Phone:***

- Jonathan Haidt, author of *The Anxious Generation* and *The Amazing Generation*, suggests waiting until 9<sup>th</sup> grade for a phone and 11<sup>th</sup> grade for social media
- Avoid “fitting in” as the reason to allow kids to have a phone (for parents *and* kids)
- Have them pay at least part of the monthly fees
- Start a social media account together and ease them into independence
- Make a contract together, including clear consequences, and hold them accountable
- Telephone conversation etiquette is established before they get a cell phone
- Use privacy settings - permission needs to be granted

***Ask your kids questions:***

***Without using names...***

- What social media behavior annoys you?
- What do you like about how people post or comment on social media platforms?
- What do you dislike about how people post or comment on social media platforms?
- What works well in group chats? What doesn't?
- How much texting is too much texting for you? How do you handle it?
- Has anyone shared your texts or photos without permission?
- What do you find surprising when you meet someone you follow in person?
- What happened on your phone today that was interesting? Boring? Funny? Irritating?
- How do some teens use social media platforms to create community? Push for social change?
- What influencers do you respect and admire? What do you like about what and how they connect with their followers?

***Model Digital Citizenship:***

- Adults balance time online and off; be available and present
- Kids feel ignored and resentful when adults are on devices, claiming they need to be on their phone “for work.” Consider: Social survival online & off is hard work for kids
- Discuss and model solitude and time without devices, work, or tasks
- Multitasking myth; Consider your tendency to “make busy” and believe you are efficient
- Think before asking Siri; adults need to keep working their brains and model that for kids
- Tell children about a time you had to resolve something offline
- Take a look through your social media behavior; walk the talk
- Ask permission before you post photos of your kids on social media
- Avoid checking the school portal! (This is the biggest request from students of all ages)