Back-to-School Safety Reminders

Summer has come to an end, and it's back-to-school for Illinois kids! Upon returning to the classroom, kids are likely to make new friends, talk about online activity, or have new digital devices. This may prompt kids to add new followers or navigate new online sites/games! With school starting, monitoring screen time and discussing online safety remains important.

One of the biggest concerns that parents have, regarding their child's engagement with technology, is screen time. Many parents ask how much is too much, and what impact might excessive screen time have on developing minds? A Pew Research Center study (2020) found that about 86% of parents are limiting their child's screen time. This is a positive sign that parents are being pro-active about their technology concerns. Kudos to parents! If you aren't already doing so, it's time to get on board!

The World Health Organization recommends 0 hours of screen time for children 0-2 years old. The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that caregivers use the technology together, if opting to introduce screens to this age group. Both recommend no more than 1 hour per day for 3-5 year olds. For children 6 years and older, pediatricians recommend 2 hours per day. It is best to make a decision that reflects individual social-emotional readiness. Every child is different, so rather than focusing on a golden age for tech milestones, pay attention to their problem-solving abilities, emotional regulation, and resilience.

It is also important to consider that not all screen time is equal. Kids use screens for a variety of activities that range from scrolling social media feeds to engaging in problem-solving and goal-oriented challenges. Common Sense Media suggests focusing on the quality of content, how kids engage with it, and whether there is a good balance of other experiences that enrich healthy development. Ask yourself the following questions to determine whether you should adjust screen time rules in your home:

- Is the content age-appropriate for my child?
- Is my child's behavior positive during and after interaction with the game/app?
- Is my child getting a healthy amount of sleep?
- Is my child getting a healthy balance of offline activities (family time, outdoor activities, etc.)?

Last, but certainly not least, pay attention to who they connect with and ask questions about their online relationships. Adjust privacy settings on your child's device as well as the individual apps and games they use. For guidance, use this resource to learn about parental controls.

Online Safe Online Smart

To learn more about online safety, access resources, or watch recorded webinars, visit us at:
https://onlinesafeonlinesmart.com/
or contact us at (888) 414-7678 or email e-info@ilag.gov.

Click here to schedule an Internet Safety Presentation for your school, organization, or community.

Is a child being sexually exploited online? Make a report at: http://cybertipline.org/.

Sources:

World Health Organization (WHO)
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