HOME TECHNOLOGY USE GUIDELINES
St. Paul's Episcopal School

Student's use of technology at home requires parental guidance and oversight. We would like to share some key strategies.

We strongly suggest your family develop a **Home Conduct Agreement** together that explicitly states how, when and where technology is used. The most important thing about this agreement is that the family creates it together. Each family's agreement will look different because it's designed to fit your family's values and behaviors. Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers, who are with your child should know and understand the expectations for technology use. Be sure to share the agreement with all caregivers.

Below are topics we have found useful you might include in your Home Conduct Agreement:

General Usage
- **Storage** - Consider having a designated place where the technology "lives" when it's not being used. This will help keep it safe (so it's not left on the floor and gets stepped on, or a table and things are piled on top of it).
- **Charging** – It's strongly recommended that the charging station is not in your child's room. Having technology in their bedroom late at night can be very tempting for playing games, chatting, and other activities when they should be sleeping.
- **Where used** – Again, it's strongly suggested that technology not be used in the bedroom. Create a space in a common area where technology can be used for homework as well as for free time, if allowed.
- **When and how long** – Technology can become addicting, especially when it's something new. Placing limits on when technology can be used, within the context of your family, can be very helpful and healthy.
- **Ergonomics** – Repeatedly using technology in positions like on the floor, on a bed, or even on their laps can lead to lifelong issues like carpal tunnel syndrome. Having a place where technology can be used on a table, especially during homework time, will limit these issues.

Helpful Considerations
- **Know It's Not Private** – It's important to understand that what is shared online is rarely private. In your Home Conduct Agreement, include what you as a family agree is okay to share online.
- **Be Honest and Forthright** – Encourage not just honesty (admitting they did something when asked), but also being forthright (coming forward without you having to ask) about their technology use.

- ***Healthy Balance of Time With and Without Technology*** – With your family, discuss times that can be technology down times for everyone. When are these times? Are there agreed upon times each week where everyone in the family stops using technology?
- ***Model Good Behavior*** – It's important that you are modeling the behaviors you are looking for in your child. When talking with your child, put down the technology. During non-tech times, ensure you are off your technology, too. During meals, turn off cell phones. If you show them you are doing it, they are more likely to have a healthy balance of tech-use and non-tech times.

Technology and Homework Time
- ***Location*** – Where can your child do their homework? Is this place different from where they can use the technology for free time, if allowed?
- ***Breaks*** – How often can they take breaks? Can technology be used during the breaks?
- ***Focus management*** - What helps with focus and staying on task? Can the TV be heard from the homework area? Should the TV be off during homework time?
- ***Sequence*** – When is homework completed? Is there a certain amount of downtime first, then homework? Is it homework right away, then downtime?
- ***Social media during homework*** – Are social media tools like messaging and hangouts allowed during homework time? Or, do you want these tools turned off during homework time?
- ***What is allowed during play time*** – Are there limits on what your child can use during down time or play time? Can they use any technology (tablet, gaming device, TV, cell phone, etc), or are there times designated for no technology or only specific technologies?
- ***Listening to music during homework***- Some students are helped with concentration and focus when they can listen to music, but for most students, music is a distraction. Knowing your child, will you allow music during homework? Can this music be private (using headphones) or does it need to be on, so you can hear too?

Internet
- ***What sites are appropriate*** – It's virtually impossible to limit the sites your child visits. There are thousands of new sites that spring up every week, and although some of these are not appropriate for younger children, many are great tools and just fun. Have a discussion about using the Internet and your expectations. Encourage your child to talk to you if they go to a site or see information/images that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- ***Creating accounts*** – Do you allow your child to create online accounts for email, social networking, gaming, other? Is there an age minimum for the site? What personal information do they share when registering for these online accounts? It is strongly advised that YOU create these accounts for them. This allows you to control what information they are including and for what sites they have accounts.

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- ***Passwords/Privacy online*** – We highly advise requiring your child to share their passwords with you. We recommend periodically looking through your child's accounts. You should have a discussion about when you will be visiting their accounts and what the purpose is.
- ***Online Identities*** – Some sites allow or even encourage creating a virtual identity or avatar. Do you allow this? Discuss with your child the importance of being honest online, but also the value of using a virtual identity when appropriate.
- ***What should/should not be shared*** – Sharing information happens online all the time. What are you allowing your child to share online in social media sites and gaming sites? Can they share their first name, their grade, their age, the city they live in, sports they play? Remember that social networks are meant to be social, so putting a stop to all sharing will make it difficult to use these tools. A good balance, in line with your family values, is the best approach.
- ***Social Networking*** – Are they allowed to use social networking tools? What are the guidelines for use? Is there a minimum age requirement? Do you have to be there when they are using it?
- ***Digital Footprint*** – Creating a digital footprint is critical for the future. Many colleges and most employers, and even some private high schools, are using an applicant's Digital Footprint in their decision making process. Remind your child that **everything** they post online, even to a gaming conversation, comes together to create their digital footprint. **A digital footprint is permanent**. Almost everything online is archived and can pop up anywhere, at any time in the future. Thinking before posting is critical. Discuss what is okay for your child to post online and what is better to do in person or not at all.

Email/Texting
- ***Audience*** – Who are they allowed to email/text? Ensure they understand their audience. Emailing/texting their grandmother or their teacher is very different than emailing/texting their friends.
- ***Type of email/texting*** – Chain letters, mean comments, jokes, and pictures are often emails/texts that students send out to "everyone" in their contacts list. Talk to them about when it's appropriate to send email or text. When is it appropriate to use *reply all*? What type of emails/texts should they be sending out?

Gaming
- ***How much time*** – Addiction, especially to gaming, is a very real problem. Placing limits of what and how often your child can play games on all devices (tablets, computers, gaming systems, cell phones), will help to limit the addiction.
- ***Where*** – It's strongly suggested that all technology use, including gaming, be done in an open and shared area. Is your child allowed to play in their room?

Device Monitoring/Management Apps

- ***[GoGuardian](#)*** - St. Paul's uses GoGuardian to monitor student ChromeBook activity. This gives us the ability to remotely view the user's screen in realtime, close tabs, lock/unlock the device, message them and more.
- ***[Google Family Link](#)*** - Simply sign in to your Chromebook, using your child's Google account to set it up, and you can restrict violent, sexually explicit and other websites. You can also monitor app usage, limit access to Google store and much more.
- ***[FamilyTime](#)*** - For Android & iOS devices. Control the content your kids should have access to, set time limits, track location, set homework and bedtimes, or limit the apps your kids have access to.
- ***[Net Nanny](#)*** - For iOS devices. Track your child's location, display their location history, set time allowances and schedules, block several dozen apps on your kid's phone.