

Information sheet for parents

Digital media in everyday family life



Children need guidance to become media literate. In other words, parents must help them to learn how to use digital media in a way that is beneficial to them and not harmful.

What makes this so difficult?

Usage time – how much is too much?

It's important for parents to pay attention to how much time their child is spending on digital media. Help your child to stick to the rules. Make a conscious effort to plan media-free times. The recommendations of Youth and Media can be taken as a guide: www.jugendundmedien.ch

Content – violence – pornography – fake news

Violence and pornography are particularly problematic. Both can be stressful and unsettling for children – especially if they encounter them on their own.

Parents need to take action in several ways:

- Monitor Internet access at home and pay attention to the games being played. Parental control software can be useful, but does not offer sufficient protection.
- It is the parents' job to listen to their child's fears and insecurities and to lend a sympathetic ear in every situation.
- On the Internet, children are confronted with a world that makes many things seem perfect. They need to learn how to critically assess the content they come across. Talk to your child and help them to differentiate between what's realistic and what isn't.

Own posts

Children must learn how to create their own posts safely. Discuss the following basic rules with your child:

- Only publish what you would hang on the school gate.
- Don't use images of other people without asking them first.
- Etiquette and rules of behaviour exist on the Internet too.

Juvenile criminal law applies from the age of 10.

Gaming and gambling

The worlds of gaming and gambling are merging. Many services initially appear to be free, but then offer users the opportunity to spend a lot of money via in-app purchases, subscriptions, loot boxes, etc.

- Parents need to help children to develop financial literacy and become aware of hidden costs.

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How can I help my child?

Children develop well if they have people around them who take an interest in them, who give them guidelines to follow and who are there for them when problems arise. A trusting and respectful relationship between parents and children is the be-all and end-all. Among other things, this means:

Agreeing on rules

Rules give children security, even if they are not always adhered to. Parents are responsible for setting the rules. Each family has their own rules, so think carefully about what is important to you personally. This is the basis for defining appropriate rules with your child.

If a rule is broken, your child may need help following it. Ask them what would make it easier for them to obey a particular rule, for example.

Punishments may achieve the desired effect, but in the long term, they place a strain on a parent's relationship with their child. A child needs someone they can talk to about unpleasant things.

Encouraging alternatives

Alternatives and experiences with real people in the real world are essential for a child's development. You can help your child by:

- Suggesting activities without digital media, such as playing football, making music, hiking, playing hide-and-seek, participating in clubs and associations.
- Adopting a creative approach to activities involving digital media. You can show your child that the digital world consists of more than just gaming and social networks, for instance by trying geocaching or experimenting with a camera and different perspectives.
- You don't always need an alternative. Accept that your child may feel bored sometimes. Boredom can be an important lesson. It can help children learn how to deal with negative feelings and take the initiative.

Sharing life experience

Today's children and young people are very tech-savvy and are often three steps ahead of their parents. However, they need to learn how to use digital media safely and analyse what's good for them and what isn't.

- Show an interest in what your child is doing on the Internet.
- Make experiences with digital media part of everyday conversation.
- Let your child show you the games they are playing. Play together.
- Reconsider your own behaviour. What kind of example are you setting?

I'm worried...

If you are at a loss what to do, don't hesitate to contact a specialist centre.

- Addiction counselling (free and anonymous): www.suchtberatung-ags.ch / www.bzbplus.ch
- School social worker / school management
- School psychologist

For further information (in German), visit:

<https://suchtprevention-aargau.ch/downloads-digitale-medien/>

