

MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENT NEWSLETTER

TIPS, IDEAS, AND ADVICE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PARENTS

CONVERSATION PROMPTS

Here are some questions you can ask your student this month.

- ▶ What is your favorite social media app?
- ▶ How are you using this app safely?
- ▶ What is your favorite online game to play?
- ▶ What is a computer skill you would like to learn?



FOCUS ON: SMART TECHNOLOGY USE

Most students today are tech savvy. However, they still need their parents to provide guidelines to help ensure that they use technology safely and responsibly. Here are some tips for helping your student enjoy the benefits of technology, while minimizing the risks.

- ▶ Keep the family computer in a central, visible location in your home. At night, require phones and tablets to be charged in the kitchen or in your bedroom.
- ▶ Have your child show you their favorite apps and websites. Ask them why they like these particular apps and sites. This is a good way to keep the lines of communication open, and to see where your child is spending time online.
- ▶ Monitor your child's online gaming. Some games on the internet contain explicit violence, mature language, and sexual content. Many games also feature chat rooms where children may be exposed to predators or adult content.

TALK ABOUT IT!

Discuss the benefits and dangers of the internet and social media, and make sure your child knows that people online may not be who they say they are. Remind your child to never give out personal information, such as name, address, phone number, or school.

SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT: SNAPCHAT

Most popular for its fun photo filters, Snapchat is a favorite platform of young people.

- ▶ **Features:** Users can post photo “stories,” which are pictures and videos that disappear after 24 hours. Private chat messages and “snaps” (photos and videos) sent between individual or groups of users also disappear after an allotted time, although users do have the option to save them. If users screenshot conversations, the other user is notified.
- ▶ **What to look out for:** Because of the disappearing-photo feature, Snapchat is also known for “sexting” (sharing sexually explicit photos). Users’ locations can also be shared on a feature called Snap Map. This feature is able to be turned off and on, and users are able to choose who they share their location with.

CHARACTER MATTERS: HONESTY

Find opportunities to talk to your child about the importance of honesty. Ask your child why they think being honest is important.

Discuss how sometimes it’s difficult to be honest, and talk about a time when it was difficult for you to be truthful. Ask your child to do the same. Also talk about how it feels when someone isn’t honest with you.

Remind your child that honesty is especially important when communicating about their activities and interactions online. Make sure your child is comfortable coming to you if there is a concern or problem, especially if your child or a friend of theirs is a target of cyberbullying or another uncomfortable interaction.

SMART RESEARCHING

When your child has a project or report that requires research online, keep in mind that websites ending in *.edu*, *.org*, and *.gov* are often the most reliable. Be wary of websites from unknown sources, or those that allow contributions from the general public.

FAMILY FUN: START A FAMILY BLOG

Starting a family blog can be an excellent way for your child to practice their writing skills, increase their typing ability, and navigate new web-based computer programs.

- ▶ First, have your student research and choose a free blog-hosting site, such as WordPress or LiveJournal.
- ▶ Together, choose one day each week or month to update the blog. Allow your child to choose the content, photos, and other media that will be included. Try out linking to websites and uploading photos and videos directly from your PC.
- ▶ Your child is old enough to type the entries, but you can proofread them together and allow your child to make any changes.

