



# TECH-GADGETS:

Setting Limits for  
Your Kids

## TECH-GADGETS: SETTING LIMITS FOR YOUR KIDS

If you're raising kids today, you've probably wondered how to limit the amount of time your children spend using electronic devices. Our children have been exposed to technological gadgets practically from birth. Separating them from their electronics can seem to be a tall order.

However, even though you may have challenges getting your kids to put down their tech toys, when you set boundaries and model appropriate use of these tools, you're doing your kids a real favor in terms of their future.

The jury is still out in terms of long-term effects of continuous computer use on eyes and overall health. However, children engaging in extended periods of sedentary behaviors throughout childhood can experience social struggles and weight gain. Therefore, moderation is the key.

### Try these strategies to establish wise limits on your kids' use of technology:

**1. Accept technology as important.** Your kids are being exposed to new technologies at school and encouraged to use computers and other devices to learn. They connect with their friends and make sense of their worlds through computers and cell phones. Given their tech-heavy environments, of course your kids are enamored with all things electronic.

**2. Avoid speaking negatively about gadgets.** Using the "technique" of talking negatively can backfire and result in some children actually gravitating more strongly toward technology. Remember that some use of electronics does teach them skills they'll need as adults navigating the information age.

**3. Talk about boundaries. Work toward being on the same page with your spouse, partner, or ex-spouse regarding any house rules about the use of electronics.**

Try discussing this subject when the kids aren't around. Then you'll provide a unified front when your child inevitably tries asking you for the extra hour of video games that your partner won't allow.



**4. Set limits early on.** The earlier in your children's lives you decide how to manage technology use, the easier things will be. Children as young as two or three are manipulating iPads, cell phones and computers to play games and do art. Therefore, do some advance planning for boundaries.

**5. Be clear about your agreed-on limits.** Limits on technology can be set in a number of ways: when the child can use the technology, how long the gadget can be used (each episode of use), and whether the technology can be taken out of the house.

**6. Avoid undesirable patterns.** How you expose your very young children to technology sets a pattern for them. It's best not to distract misbehaving kids with your iPad as this can be interpreted by them as being rewarded for negative behaviors.

- Instead, try something like, "As soon as you pick up all your toys, Mommy will let you play games on the computer for 15 minutes."

**7. Keep it in perspective.** As with all things in life, encourage your child to partake in a wide range of activities. Ensure that your child is involved in some physical activities, like intramural sports or the YMCA track team. As a parent, you're in a position to plan regularly scheduled family activities for the family.

- Going out to dinner together or riding bikes on a Saturday morning are wonderful family activities. When you focus on showing your kids that life is made up of many things, not just playing with technology, they'll learn not to cling too tightly to gadgets.

**Try putting several of these strategies to work at your house.**

***You'll be pleased at how well your children adjust to and stay within the technology limits you've set for them.*** Establishing these boundaries teaches your children to do the same as they grow and mature. As they learn to balance their own lives, they'll develop into well-rounded, healthy adults.



