

Conversation Starters

Start a conversation. Be comfortable with long pauses. Encourage. Story tell.

Staying involved in your teen's life is important—even when they grow older and become more independent. Your guidance and support will continue long after they are 18. Keep the conversations open and honest.



Conversations are a part of life. Technology is just another topic of conversation.

LISTEN and ENCOURAGE

Through thoughtful questioning, you can get a picture of how your child is using technology now and how you can help them to manage it better (see the 'Rules and Boundaries' section of this course for more guidelines).

It's a good idea to start by **asking about their friends** as they do not feel like they are going to get into trouble.

- Are many of your friends on social media?
- Do your friends have their own computers?
- Do your friends use their phones to access the Internet at school?

Include a little bit about your experience as a teenager, and acknowledge that technology has changed how teenagers communicate and play.

- When I was a teenager, we had to take turns using the home phone to call our friends after school. Now everyone has a phone. I notice you don't make too many calls on your mobile. How do you and your friends catch up?
- Ask follow-up questions to learn more:
 - What programs do you and your friends use?
 - Why do you like those?
- I used to play Pac-Man and Mario Bros when I was your age. The graphics on these games are amazing. Can you tell me about the game?
 - Can you teach me how to play? Or I bet I could beat you. (Whatever works in your family dynamics, but you get the picture.)



Take opportunities to ask really **general questions**, and then **prompt** to find out more when you feel there is a need. Some of these questions may be useful.

- What do you do on your computer for school work?
- What do you like to do on your iPad (iPod, tablet, etc.)?
- Can I join you? Can you tell me about this?
- What places do you like to visit online?
- What do you enjoy most about this game?
- What websites or games do you think you probably spend the most time on?
- Are you having fun? (The Internet can be a great source of entertainment and education in the home, when managed correctly.)
 - What's your favourite thing to do online?

It's important to establish whether your child is **playing games online with people you do not know**.

- What can you tell me (about the game you're playing / the application you're using)? Get them to teach you how it works. Get excited and involved (or at least show a genuine interest so they are happy to share).
 - Who are you playing with?
 - Can you talk to them in the game?
 - (If yes) What sorts of things do you talk about?
 - Do you know where any of them live? Are some of them from other countries? (You are trying to establish how much information they share. Remind your teen that sharing too much may put them all at risk. They may be allowed to play with other people or not—your rules—but they should not be sharing any personal information. It is neither necessary nor wise.)
 - Does anything happen in the chat that makes you a bit uncomfortable?



This is a great way to lead into the discussion about or reiterate the importance of house rules for technology.

We don't share information about ourselves or our family online.

Trust your instincts. If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't right.

Ask **specific questions** if you are worried.

- Have you got any questions?
- Is anything upsetting you?
 - You can tell me anything about what happens on the computer; I'm here. We can work it out together.
- Is anything online worrying you?

It is okay if you make a mistake; you can tell me. I can help you work it out.
You should tell me if something has gone wrong. We can find a solution together.

Make talking about technology and the Internet a normal part of your life. Be a ready and willing sounding board for their decisions.

Your child can be held accountable for their actions. Wouldn't you rather find out about issues early?