



Managing Kids and the Internet

School Age Children and Tweens

School-age children and tweens are beginning to establish their special interests and individual identities, often seeking connections with peers who they perceive as similar to them. They are venturing into the world without a parent by their side, exploring personal roles and building close relationships with peers, teachers, coaches and other mentors. Many school-age children are using the internet for the first time, and they need as much guidance in growing up online as offline.

Parents' Role and Practical Tips

As your children begin to use the internet on their own, you can model focused and safe internet use, provide guidelines and expectations for navigating the internet safely and effectively, and provide an open avenue of communication and support if your children venture into content for which they aren't ready.

Some specific tips:

- **Have a shared family computer located in a public space.** This allows you to supervise school-age kids' online time without hovering.
- **The length of an online session should match your child's natural attention span.** School-age kids' brains can focus for about 30 minutes at a time, so they won't really get much more from sessions longer than that. Mix in some downtime and encourage other activities, including playing outside, which offers benefits for physical and mental health. A good trick is to set a schedule of computer time with dinner acting as a halftime.
- **Use technological controls thoughtfully to help avoid accidental exposure to content for which your children aren't ready.** Tools such as parental controls help parents manage what their kids can access online. Comcast's new technology, [Xfinity xFi](#), makes this easy by allowing parents to manage these controls in one place.

Teens

Teens are moving toward even greater independence from their parents, figuring out who they are and asserting their individuality. In the media realm, as in other realms, teens move from identifying as members of a group ("We all watch The Voice") to striking out on their own ("I created my own blog about baseball"). The increasing freedom and privacy is exciting and opens new possibilities for both learning and harm.

Parents' Role and Practical Tips

Even though they look like adults and demand to be treated as adults, teens aren't yet adults. Your role is to respect your teen's desire for independence while also helping your teen understand that his or her actions have outcomes. Work cooperatively to grow together so your teen understands your online expectations and you understand the reasons for your teen's activities. Some specific tips:

- **To support involvement in other activities, work with teens on balancing what matters most to them.** Help them to prioritize and manage their time, making sure that a healthy amount of sleep, an unplugged family meal, and academic and family obligations come first. A tool like Xfinity xFi can set and manage scheduled Wi-Fi hours so teens can power down their bodies and

devices. You also can use xFi to monitor how often and when your teen is connected in the home.

- **Gradually increase your teen's freedom to decide how to use the internet.** She or he will push for more freedom, a natural part of preparing for adulthood. Trust your teen to make good decisions and appropriately manage his or her time online. Use tools to monitor their time online, and if they spend too much time online, temporarily pause their Wi-Fi use to establish a balance.
- **Use technology as a family gathering option.** Everyone has their own shows or spaces online that they like to visit and can do so anywhere via tablets and laptops. Instead of each family member staking out his or her own corner of the house, encourage everyone to gather in the family room. This offers the opportunity to physically share online activities and encourages conversation. When possible, seek out shows or online sites that appeal to all family members so that at least some online activities become shared experiences and a focus of learning with and from each other.

