

RGS Advice on Parenting with Smartphones

The RGS view on acceptable phone use:

- Not during the school day (8.40am - 3.40pm)
- Not at meal times
- Not at bedtime

Some advice:

1. *Communicate – Rather than impose boundaries straight away, discuss what would be acceptable amounts of time and use for your son’s smartphone and allow him to come up with a set of rules for how he will use the phone responsibly.*
2. *Lead by example – One of the most common points of tension between parents and children about smartphone use is when parents expect a standard of behaviour and use from their children which they do not model themselves. Sticking to the same boundaries, which you have agreed with your child, will make discussion about their use much easier. Start to prioritise times when you are not going to use your phone – meal times being an obvious example. Some families opt for a ‘Digital Sabbath’ where the whole family agree not to use their phones – it is much easier to give up your use when you are doing it with others.*
3. *Learn - Seek out the latest information about technology and the applications which your children are using. This will ensure that you are well informed and empowered and don’t feel that you have lost control and are unable to make informed decisions about what your children should be doing on their phone.*
4. *Varied Diet – Don’t worry so much about screen time but more about what content is being consumed on the platform. If you understand what is being looked at on their phone and you are well informed you will be in a stronger position to offer alternatives or steer them away from potentially harmful material.*
5. *Sleep – No devices in the bedroom. Charge phones and devices downstairs. Buy them an alarm clock to prevent the ‘need’ to use their phone to wake up.*
6. *Establish healthy habits – You should aim to avoid a battle over your son’s access to his phone – a boy’s anxiety about what they are ‘missing out on’ as their friends are on their phones late into the night will cause tension when you try to remove his device. Have an early conversation about what is acceptable use and establish what is a ‘normal routine’ for the use of smartphones.*
7. *Substitute phone use with something else exciting – Trying to swap the latest exciting gaming craze for a book will not work! Some alternatives are clubs and activities which build a sense of belonging and release adrenaline and endorphins into the body. Most forms of team sports and physical activity will provide this. Therefore, it is imperative that your son engages with the co-curricular offer at school – there are 82 different clubs and sports available at school, some of which offer after school training on a weekly basis. Outside RGS, there is also swimming, cycling, Cadets, Scouts and football, to mention but a few common activities.*

Suggested sources of information:

Bringing up Britain - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bbnz03> a thought provoking BBC Radio 4 programme which discusses the challenges of parenting in the smartphone age.

Make Technology Work for Your Family – New York Times article which has Top Tips for using technology constructively - <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/family-technology>

Screens and teens: survival tips for parents on the technology battlefield – A Telegraph article that gives tips on managing smartphone use - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/family/parenting/screens-teens-survival-tips-parents-technology-battlefield/>