



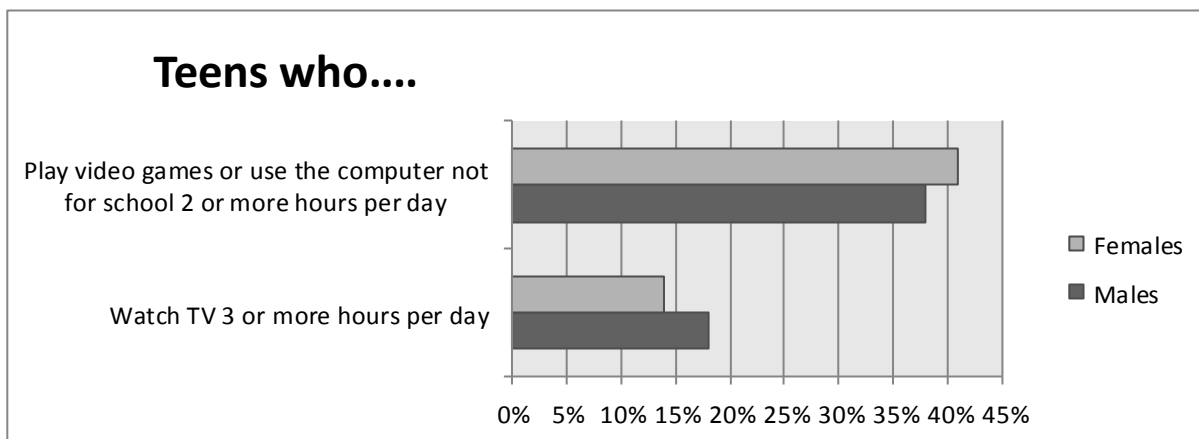
# Parents Make A Difference!

## Parenting Teens with Technology -

Facebook and Cell Phones and Blogs...Oh My!

January 2016

The role of digital technology (think computers, the Internet, video games, cell phones, etc.) in the lives of children has been increasing over the last decade at an astonishing rate. Considering previous generations and the role of radio, film, and television, it is clear that this situation is not new. However, digital media has been changing swiftly since the introduction of the personal computer in the late 1970s. Many parents are only partially aware of the kinds of digital media that are being used by their children and may feel left behind in this emerging digital world.



According to the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) of 5,309 students in 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders from 25 schools in southwest Wisconsin, the majority of teens are strong users of technology. When this survey was conducted in the fall of 2015:

- 79% of teens were playing video/computer games or using a computer for non-school work 2 or more hours per day. Time spent on homework using the internet was not included in this question.
- 32% of teens were watching TV more than three hours each week.

Parents do attempt to monitor their teen's use of the internet by having rules. In the YRBS survey, 70% of middle school students report their parents have rules about internet use and 48% of high school students report the same.

It is common for parents to focus on the potential problems of digital media use, like cyber-bullying or online predators, and how they can protect their children from such dangers. However, there are many positive aspects of digital media, including the ways that it can contribute to your children's development, enhance the parent-teen relationship and provide new tools to strengthen and extend parenting skills.

It is a parent's job to provide love, safety, guidance and resources for their teens. These issues have not changed much over the last several generations, but the way they can be provided has, especially because of technology. By recognizing the important role that digital media can play, parents can be more prepared to adapt their parenting skills to match the needs of their teen and their family.

Parents of today's teenagers might consider how to use digital media in their role as a parent. Turn the page to discover ways parents can use digital media as a positive force to enhance their parenting skills and better communicate with their teen.

PARENTAL ROLE	STRATEGY	USE DIGITAL MEDIA
<b>Love and Communicate</b>	Listen to thoughts, feelings and concerns	Text a question rather than accusatory message if you suspect negative behavior
	Appreciate your teen's new skills, interests and abilities	Ask your child to help you set up a Facebook page
<b>Monitor and Protect</b>	Track your teen's activities knowing where they are, who they are with and when they'll be home	Have your teen text you after school or when they're out with friends for a brief "check in"
	Watch for warning signs of poor physical and mental health in your child	Monitor your child's social media sites and online gaming groups and discussions
<b>Guide and Limit</b>	Use discipline as a tool for teaching and guiding, not for venting or taking revenge	Instead of banning your teen from their social networking site for posting a hurtful comment about another teen, have your teen research the consequences of bullying
	As your teen's skills and maturity improve, work out new responsibilities and privileges	Allow more freedom in choices of video games
<b>Model and Teach</b>	Provide opportunities that help your teen practice decision-making	Involve child in making rules around the use of digital media (screen time, selection of games, etc.)
	Model good lifestyle habits and set a good example around risk-taking	Play active digital media games together
<b>Advocate and Connect</b>	Identify people and services that can support your parenting	Add the email addresses and cell numbers to your contacts list of key people in your child's life (e.g., teachers, coaches, other parents)
	Advocate for your child by looking out for his/her best interests	Check school web site on regular basis to keep track of school activities

## Remember – parents make a difference!

By understanding the normal growth and development of teens, parents can better provide them with what they need to become caring, responsible young adults. That includes realizing the role that digital media plays in the lives of today's youth and how it can provide teens with a new avenue for moving toward adulthood.

### Parenting with Digital Media Resources:

→UW-Extension : <http://fyi.uwex.edu/parenting/>

→Common Sense Media (<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>)

→Digital Parenting: Protecting and Empowering Kids

(<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/frntt.pd.battle/digital-parenting-protecting-and-empowering-kids/>)

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