



COFFEE CHAT

Next Coffee Chat

The next Coffee Chat will be hosted early in the new term. Please keep an eye on your emails for the upcoming invitation.

Exam Recovery

After a stressful examination period, children may feel exhausted and frustrated. It is important for them to have some downtime to recharge before the final term.

Goal setting

The examinations are a great indicator of where your children are academically. These results should be used to set goals for the final term and the final examinations.

Holiday fun

The holiday should be a time to relax and have some fun. At this point in the year we can all feel quite stressed and so it is important to take a proper break so that we can tackle the final few months of the year.

Cyber Parenting

Upon reflection of the last CoffeeChat, it is clear that one of the greatest challenges presenting itself to today's parents, with regards to cyber space, is how to control it.

Unfortunately there is no clear and easy answer to this, but one thing that is absolutely crucial, and that should be the starting point for each household, is to have a very clear set of rules, limitations and expectations for the whole family.

The internet is a playground for all sorts of undesirable characters, activities and content. For this reason we should be very careful what we allow our children to access during their time online. Unfortunately, many of our children are far more tech-savvy than we as adults are, which can make monitoring their online behaviour even more difficult. For this reason, cyber parenting is so important and should be taken seriously. It is imperative that you create the rules as well as explain the need for these rules, removing all ambiguity. Importantly, these cyber rules need to apply to all individuals in the house, including you as the parents.

Why Cyber Parenting?

We recently had Emma Sadleir present a PT21 talk on the topic of *Social Media Law*, which opened our eyes to the scary reality of the internet and the potential harm and legal ramifications of our online behaviour. Following Emma's presentation, it was clear that we need





Tips for parents: internetsecurity.com

1. Become a net-savvy parent

The best safeguard against online dangers is being informed.

2. "Chat" with your kids

Develop an open dialogue so that you can talk with your kids about the benefits and dangers of the Internet.

3. Agree on a game plan

Use the InternetSafety.com [Gameplan™](http://Gameplan.com) to formally agree on your family's guidelines for using the Internet.

4. Protect your computer

Take advantage of the software that exists to help parents manage their children's computer experience.

5. Explore the Internet as a family

With a game plan and a protected computer, you can now encourage your family to take advantage of all that the Internet has to offer.

to learn more about what our children are doing online, but also take a much more active role in monitoring their online behaviour.

Where do we start?

The starting point is **educating** ourselves on what our children are exposed to, what the age limits are, and what we can do to help protect them. It is essential to set some time aside so that you can answer your questions and be informed. It is also crucial to determine how technology fits into your family and ties in with your family values, rules and boundaries. Cyber parenting and discipline within the home are inseparable as your children's online behaviour should mirror that of what you expect from them in reality (please refer to the *Discipline* notes if you missed that CoffeeChat)

Age Limits

Each website and social network will have their own age restrictions, research these and become familiar with these so that you are not in the dark. It is also a good idea to have a look over some of the terms and conditions so that you have a better understanding of what using a certain website or application actually means. Here are some age limits for a few popular websites:

Facebook – 13 years old
Instagram – 13 years old
YouTube – 13 years old
Myspace – 13 years old
Snapchat – 13 years old
WhatsApp – 16 years old
Twitter – no age limit
(thirdparent.com)

Time Limits

How long should your children, or you, be spending in front of a screen each day is a very difficult question to answer. There is plenty of research on the topic, however a lot of it provides contradictory or vague generalisations. At the end of the day, we need to bear two important facts in mind. Firstly, all screens emit a blue light that refreshes numerous times a second (we don't notice this), whether it is a cellphone, television or iPad. The younger a person is, the less developed their central nervous system is which interprets these "flashing" impulses. Screen time can impact the neural development in our brains, and so we need to limit the use where we can. [Click here for an article on the matter.](#)

Secondly, we need to bear in mind what screen time means within our families. How do you spend your own time at home, how much time does your family spend in front of a screen, and how much

screen time would you prefer for your family. This becomes a personal choice for each individual family and should be related back to your family values, and discipline structures.

Application and content limits

The internet is an amazing resource that is loaded with information and useful content, however we need to be aware of the inappropriate, time-wasting and explicit content that is also online that children are very likely to come across. Being aware of what children are doing online is important when it comes to monitoring and protecting them from harmful content. Rules need to be set and discussed with all family members as to what type of content, when and how it may be accessed. Following this, it will be important to put other measures in place as some children will purposely still seek this content, while others may innocently come across it. Therefore, having firewalls, different user accounts and monitoring software is important.

The way forward

- Take **control** - do not let your children dictate what, when and how they use technology and the internet. It is up to you and the rules that have been implemented at home.
- Set **limits and restrictions**, and be very clear on these for all members in the home.
- Be a **role model** for the behaviour you want to see in your children.
- Be **informed** - spend time researching and learning how to use websites, programs and devices.
- Set up different **user profiles** on all computers at home that have different restrictions per user. You can even determine what time or how much time can be spent on the computer.
- **Mobile devices** need to be controlled too, set rules and make use of the restrictions settings where possible, or even make use of a third party application to help control these devices.
- There needs to be **understanding** that as a parent you will monitor and check your children's device and internet usage, as you have responsibility to protect them, it is not that you do not trust them, and there should be no negotiation on this point.
- Keep your computer and online connection **password protected** and use passwords that ingenious children cannot figure out. Change your password on a regular basis. It is better to be safe than sorry.
- Make sure that you **teach your children** about online safety. When they are small we teach them about not talking to strangers, yet we forget to do this when they start using the internet. Make sure that you teach your children not to give out their full names, where they live or their phone numbers. *Emma Sadleir's book "Don't film yourself having sex"* is a very good resource when dealing with online safety. Familiarise yourself with the content of her book and make sure that you and your children understand the laws of the cyber world.
- Be sure to install **filtering software** to prevent your children from being exposed to topics that would make you cringe, but remember that software is only a tool, NOT a replacement for your involvement. Some examples of good filtering software are:
 - [SentryPC](#)
 - [CyberSitter](#)
 - [Cyber Patrol](#)
 - [Net Nanny](#)
 - [Qustodio](#)

Lastly, online monitoring is a sign of a caring parent who is involved in their children's activities and the information that they are in contact with. Yes, learning about the internet is frustrating and time consuming, but it is imperative in today's society.

A computer, cellphone or tablet with an online connection is not a baby sitter and we need to take an active role in teaching and protecting our children. Learn, get involved and be a part of your children's online experiences. Look at it as an activity you can share together!

[Please click here to visit my blog for more useful resources that you can use to help you take control of technology and the internet at home.](#)

If you have any questions please contact Lloyd Ripley-Evans at ripley-evansl@stdavids.co.za.

We look forward to seeing you at the next Coffee Chat after August holiday. Keep an eye on your email for more information.

