Reading for Healthy Families (RFHF) Oregon:
Building Communities of Learning

Ideas for Setting Limits for Screen Time

- Set firm time limits on your child's screen time (TV, computer, video games, smart phones, etc). Doctors recommend only 1-2 hours per day.
- If the screens are always in your house, slowly reduce the time to 2 hours a day over the course of a month to make a smooth transition.
- Keep the TV off unless it is time to watch a specific show of your choice.
- Set a rule of no screen time until homework and chores are finished.
- Eat dinner with all screens off so you can engage in conversation.
- Do not reward children for good behavior with additional screen time.
- Help your children plan their screen time. Go online to learn more about specific shows and games so you and your child can make educated choices.
- Post your child's screen time schedule on the refrigerator, near the TV, or near the computer—this is especially important if you have more than one child.
- If your child has to watch TV shows when they air on TV, help your child manage their time so they won't miss the shows they really want to watch.
- Most video games have to be saved or your child will lose progress so make sure they save their game before turning it off—never turn it off without warning.
- Move the TV, computer, video games, and other screen media out of your child's bedroom.
- Provide your child with alternative activities to do when they are not in front of a screen—books, board games, and other toys.
- It's OK for your child to be bored! If your child says "I'm bored" or "there's nothing to do" give them two or three suggestions. If they still complain, invite them to help you with one of your activities, projects, or chores.
- If screen time becomes a problem in your family, unplug them and go completely without screens for a few days.

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Ideas for Setting Expectations about Media Use

- Talk to your child about the good qualities of TV shows, movies, video games, and websites, and set the expectation that media will be selected based on these good qualities.

- Talk to your child about what is not appropriate (violence, sex, racism, etc.), and expect that media with these qualities will be avoided. Product descriptions and reviews never describe all the content; there will be times when you and your child accidentally select something with inappropriate content. When this happens, teach your child to turn it off and come tell you about it.

- Expect your child to select specific shows, games, and websites so your child is in control of their viewing—surfing channels or the web gives up control to the media.

- Establish a routine of turning the TV on to watch a specific show, then turning the TV off when it is over. Expect your children to do the same.

- Join your child a few times a week in front of the screen to enjoy it with them, ***not*** to check up on them! Your child should expect you to engage with them around media.

- Talk to your child about the media they are using, and talk with them about the media you are using. Your child should expect to have conversations with you about media.

- Read books related to topics from your child's favorite TV show, video game, or website. Your child should expect that the media they like will extend to reading and vice-versa.

- Do follow-up activities based on a TV show, video game, or website your child is particularly interested in. Your child should expect that the media they like will relate to the activities in their life and vice-versa.

- The best way to set expectations is to model the behavior you expect from your child because you are your child's first teacher.

- Teaching online safety is extremely important as your child gets older. For more information on internet safety go to the American Library Association's website: http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/foryoungpeople/childrenparents/especiallychildren.cfm#online

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