

Dealing with rule-breaking

My child keeps removing the parental control I have installed

This can be frustrating for parents navigating the digital space. Try to remain calm and try to understand why your child is doing this. Is it because they want to be playing the same games as their peers? Is it out of curiosity, or are they testing boundaries?

Talk to your child about your family's screen routine and rules and use device management and parental controls to switch off access to WiFi and/or enforce boundaries. It's important to explain in an age-appropriate way that the parental controls have been set up to protect you all from dangerous situations. Use a digital device contract and encourage a balance of activities away from technology. Using positive reinforcement for positive behaviours and modelling positive digital behaviours yourself may assist.

If your child is exhibiting continuous problematic and or defiant behaviour you may want to seek help from a child psychologist.

My child has set up social media accounts without my consent

This can be a surprise for parents, however, try to stay calm and find out why and how this has happened. Social media is not recommended at this age and your child may be doing it out of curiosity or testing boundaries.

In an age-appropriate way explain your screen routine and house rules to keep your family safe from dangers. Delete the social media accounts and check that they have not shared any personal private information or been in contact with strangers. It would be helpful to use parental controls/device management to enforce your rules.

If your child feels they are missing out on interacting with their friends on social media, encourage them to come to you to discuss it, and that you can work with them on ways to solve the problem. Increase online supervision of your child, and communicate about the online world regularly. If your child is exhibiting worrying behaviour you may like to speak to your child's teacher or the school counsellor.

My child is sneaking their device overnight

This can be concerning and a shock for parents, however, try to stay calm and explain that this is not ok and why, and that in your home it is important you use devices safely. Explain that your family has a screen routine and rules and devices are kept charging/switched off in a designated area overnight. Explain to your child that this is because you want to keep them safe

from dangers and that device use at night can affect their sleep, as well as expose them to content that can be scary or upsetting.

Try to find out what they have been doing on their device by searching through the history, and, if necessary, block or restrict any platforms that are not age-appropriate and delete accounts.

Use technology (parental controls/device management) to enforce your rules and help them stick to designated times. Model positive device behaviour yourself using positive reinforcement to promote positive behaviour.

If your child continues to exhibit defiant behaviour you may like to speak to your child's teacher or the school counsellor.

My child is chatting to people they are not supposed to online

This can be very concerning for parents. Try to remain calm but act quickly to limit any potential risks.

Recommended approach:

1. Find out how this came about - if your child has been pressured, coerced or chatted to people out of curiosity?
2. Explain the danger to their safety and privacy, reiterating that we don't speak to strangers online and that if they want to speak to someone, they need to know their first and last name, know them in person and ask you as their parent.
3. Explain to your child in an age-appropriate way that this can be dangerous and can risk their safety/privacy.
4. Check browsing/chat history and remove any shared information. If necessary, report illegal activity to authorities, and block accounts.
5. Set up parental controls to manage your child's online experiences so they cannot chat to strangers online and increase online supervision of your child.
6. Continue to talk with your child about the experiences we want to have online (positive, entertainment, learning, keeping in touch only with people we know) and about the need to always be safe.
7. If your child is distressed seek professional help.

My child is using their device to play games, etc., when they are supposed to be doing homework

While this can be frustrating for parents, try to remain calm and explain why this is not ok and that your child needs to utilise their devices appropriately, leaving games for times when the other jobs are done.

Explain to your child that your family has a screen routine and rules, and devices are only to be used for games during allotted times (e.g., on the weekends or after schoolwork is done). Explain that this is because you want to make sure that they use their device for games sensibly and that it's important that they focus properly on their homework without distractions.

It may seem obvious but ask the reasons why they have been playing games when they are not supposed to, and check that the game is age-appropriate. If necessary block or restrict any games that are not age-appropriate, and reiterate the times they are allowed to access their games by using a [digital device contract](#).

Use technology (parental controls/device management) to enforce your rules if necessary and help them stick to designated times by using a family calendar or schedule.

If your child continues to exhibit defiant behaviour you may like to speak to your child's teacher or the school counsellor.

www.interactionservices.org/online-safety-training