



# Shape Your Expectations: Youth-Parent Contract for Digital Technologies

## Part One: The Conversation

Part one is designed to help start the discussion of how you want technology to be a part of your child's life.

It can be used in various ways:

- You can read this with your child and discuss topics as you go. Be sure to fill in your own experiences to enhance its meaning in your family.
- You can have your child read it and then have a conversation with them about your family's expectations.
- You can read this before you talk to your child and present them with the contract as an outline for your discussion.

Modify this to fit your family needs. The idea is to have a conversation about how technology is going to fit into your child and family's life.

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Dear Son, Daughter, Child I Love,

You are at that age where you are wanting a smartphone, iPod, tablet, or digital device that can connect you to the world. If we are reading this together, then I am considering your request to move to this next stage in your life. If we are reading this together and you already have a device, realize I am trying to parent differently. I'm readjusting how I watch over, teach, and love you to meet the challenges of the world today: A digital landscape of tweets, messages, likes, and selfies. Yes, I'm on-board with this new thing called technology. Don't roll your eyes at me. 😊

Here are a few concepts we have to talk about if we are to work together, as a family, to safely incorporate digital technology into our family life.

### **Your "Before Technology" Requirements:**

In order for you to be eligible to have digital technology (iPod, smartphone, tablet, laptop or other device), you must role model being a responsible son/daughter by:

- ✓ Consistently demonstrating that you are a person of integrity. Integrity is defined as "doing the right thing even when no one is watching."
- ✓ Consistently being a role model of kindness and respect to others. How you act in person is a reflection of how you will be expected to act online.
- ✓ Consistently achieving grades in school that show you are working hard, studying, and doing all in-class assignments and homework.
- ✓ Consistently doing all of your assigned chores/tasks and household responsibilities without being told to do them.
- ✓ Consistently proving that you are a responsible person with precious items and will be able to take care of expensive technology. This means you do not leave items at school or otherwise lose things, you do not leave things lying outside, you put things away when you are done with them, and you take care of your possessions.

I / We will not even consider allowing you to have a connected digital device until you have shown your growth, responsibility, and maturity.

### **Your Before Technology Balance:**

Before technology, you had balance in your life. You enjoyed many things. Growing up you:

- ☺ Played outside with your friends and sibling(s).
- ☺ Had playdates with your friends and played with toys that didn't need to be charged.
- ☺ Enjoyed talking face-to-face with friends, family, and kids at school.
- ☺ Made arts and crafts, built Legos, and had a room with toys that occupied your time.
- ☺ Went to the movies with friends, read books on the couch, and listened to music.
- ☺ Told me about your school day and what fun things your teachers taught you.
- ☺ Shared things that you and your friends talked about, wished for, and thought were funny.
- ☺ Rode your bike, scooter, skateboard, and other things with wheels.
- ☺ Played baseball, soccer, football, basketball, and other sports.
- ☺ Colored a picture that was hung on the fridge.



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All of these things (and many more) made for a balance in your life. You must not allow these to disappear as a result of having the technology listed in this contract. At any point I see that you are losing the joys of the unconnected world around you, I will bring you back to a world that you enjoyed before technology. I will help you restore balance.

### **A Reminder of What Words Mean:**

Words can have more than one definition, and I don't want you to get lost in the ever-shifting way words are used due to technology. Please remember that:

A *friend* is someone you met face-to-face and got to know by hanging out with them in-person. They are someone you can pat on the back when they score the winning goal. A friend smiles back at you with their lips and teeth, not an emoji.

A "friend" online is someone you have connected with digitally and will never have the depth of a friendship you have made in real life (IRL). They can not and will not be able to know you like your friends from elementary school do. It's just not how it works. Your goal in life is to accumulate friends, not "online connections" or "followers".

"Talking to" means having a conversation face to face or over the phone. Please use the right terms for communication. A text message is a text message, a DM is a direct message and a message through whatever social media you are going to use is a shortened digital message. Many hurt feelings and lost friendships start with a misinterpreted text message, tweet, online post, etc.

### **Being "Left Out":**

With your new piece of technology, you will have opportunities to feel left out. You will not be invited to every mall trip, movie showing, or weekend party. That's how growing up works. There are many events you *will* be invited to join. You will go, you will have fun, and you will create wonderful memories. Watching events you are not invited to through a "story" with your technology has no constructive benefit for your emotional health. Please avoid the temptation to watch from the outside. Embrace yourself in the ones you do get invited to. If you are upset over not getting invited to an event, remember I'm most likely at home and would love to spend that time with you. Find me and we can go to dinner and a movie.

### **Fitting In:**

Life is an ever-evolving experiment in learning where you "fit in" with the world. Will my friends like my new shirt? Where should I sit at lunch? How should I do my hair? What social media should I use? And a big one: Do I have to do something I don't want to do to fit it? The answer is "no", you don't have to do something you don't want to so you "fit in". You never should compromise yourself to fit it. You may see people using their technology to be mean to others. Do not be unkind through technology so that you "fit in" with the crowd. Please remember this old saying: What's popular isn't always right, and what's right isn't always popular. Do what is right.

### **Knowledge and Wisdom:**

Here is where we must join forces. You have grown up in a world surrounded with technology. From a young age, you have learned to use this technology, and you picked up on the skills and knowledge to use it very easily. Like riding your bike, the more you practiced it, the better you got. I started using it at a time when I did not have the time to practice it like you have, and I use it differently than you will. Wisdom can't be bought, you must earn it as you grow. Be patient; you are now gathering the experiences that will shape your wisdom in later years. You have the knowledge to work all of this technology; please teach me how to keep up with all of the trending gadgets and social media platforms. In exchange, I will offer my wisdom to help guide you through using technology with integrity. Please never be afraid to ask me for help. It's why I'm here. This is our partnership.

### **Emotional Health:**

Finally, I want to impress upon you the importance of maintaining your emotional health. From a young age you have been told, taught, and encouraged to take care of your physical health. You eat right, exercise, and brush your teeth. Please understand that your emotional health is just as important. You need to understand your feelings, thoughts; and moods. With a healthy body there is balance between your diet and exercise. With a healthy mind, there is balance between your emotions, thoughts and actions. Technology can be a fun way to exercise your mind. There are many websites and apps that help you learn. Technology can also exercise your mind in destructive ways as well. If you find yourself preoccupied with checking your phone for a message or wanting to see what others are doing, try to pull yourself back to a healthy balance. Never be afraid to tell me if you feel your balance is beginning to suffer. I am your parent, and I will help you emotionally just as I have physically.



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## Part Two: The Terms

This Contract is for a:    New Device:\_\_\_\_\_    Updating Terms of a Currently Owned Device: \_\_\_\_\_

This technology contract is held between:

The parent(s) \_\_\_\_\_

and

The child\_\_\_\_\_.

The start date of this contract is\_\_\_\_\_.

This contract will be initially reviewed again on or before\_\_\_\_\_. On that date a review of responsible use will be conducted to assess if this contract will be continued, modified, or ended. This contract will be reviewed every \_\_\_\_\_(weeks, months, etc.) thereafter.

### **Youth Expectations**

1. Technology is a privilege and not a right. I am willing to continue the responsible behaviors I have displayed to earn this privilege.
2. I will use any and all technology with integrity. Integrity is defined as: *doing the right thing even when no one is watching.*
3. This contract will cover any piece of technology I use, including those owned by my parents, my siblings, and school, and me. This extends to any device that is electronic and connects to the internet.
4. I will take care of any device I use. Technology is expensive and should be valued as a tool and not something that will be simply be replaced/repared if damaged.
5. I will be responsible for any damage repairs or replacement costs made to any devices I use.
6. I will not “loan” or allow others to use my device(s).
7. I will always answer my parent(s) calls/texts messages. If I miss a call/text from them I will call/text them back as soon as I see the missed message. Failure to do so will result in \_\_\_\_\_(loss of device/suspended privilege/ending of contract, etc.) for \_\_\_\_\_(days, weeks, etc.).
8. I will be permitted to use my device for \_\_\_\_\_(minutes/hours) on a school day. On a non-school day I will be permitted to use my device for \_\_\_\_\_(minutes/hours).
9. My device(s) will not be permitted in my room after \_\_\_\_\_(designate a time).
10. My device(s) will be stored/charged at this location in the house: \_\_\_\_\_(ex. Basket in the living room).
11. Related to school, my device will \_\_\_\_\_(stay at home, be permitted to take to school).
12. I will follow the rules/policies of school/work/community areas related to technology.
13. I will share the passwords to my devices, my app store accounts, and all social media accounts with my parents. This is for my security and safety. If something should ever happen to me, my parent(s) need to be able to access all of my accounts to help locate me.
14. If I change a password, I will notify you. Any password changes without notifying my parent(s) of the new password will result in a loss of technology privilege until further notice.
15. I am responsible for a percentage of the monthly cost of my device. The current monthly cost to me will be \_\_\_\_\_. This cost will be reassessed at every contract review based upon trending costs of technology, my age, and jobs I acquire.
16. I will have open communication with my parents about any apps I want to download.
17. I will not create more than one account for any app.
18. I understand who someone says they are online is not who they may be in real life.
19. I will not share personal identifying information online or through social media. Examples of personal information are: full name, birthdate, address, age, driver’s license picture, school ID picture, bank accounts, debit cards, when I’m not home, home alone or on vacation, school I attend, or other identifying information.





## Shape Your Expectations: Youth-Parent Contract for Digital Technologies

20. I will not share any personal information as stated in #19 with anyone who is asking for this online (ex: I will not share my phone number with someone I “met” on a social media account if asked).
21. I will never meet someone in person I “met” online. If anyone is asking to meet me, I will tell my parents immediately and ask for guidance.
22. I will never share pictures of myself with anyone I “met” online who is asking me to send pictures. I will immediately tell my parents and ask for guidance.
23. I will use technology with self-respect. I will never share/post inappropriate language, comments, or sexual/inappropriate/nude pictures of myself. Sharing inappropriate or nude pictures/videos of myself violates this contract and the law and my privileges will immediately be suspended.
24. I will not forward or share any sexual, inappropriate, or nude pictures of others that I have seen or have been sent to me. I will show my parents immediately and ask for guidance.
25. I will not request sexual or nude pictures/videos/content from anyone. That is not fair to them and puts them in an uncomfortable situation.
26. I will check all apps on my device(s) to learn which apps can share my location. I will turn off location services for apps after reviewing this information with my parent(s) and deciding which apps are appropriate for location service function(s).
27. When I share/post something through technology, I will consider how others (my family, friends, and even strangers) may feel when they see what I share/post. I will not share/post anything that could be hurtful, mean or degrading to anyone else.
28. I understand that anything I post is permanent. Even after I delete what I shared/posted, the content may be available to others. Nothing is ever truly gone once it is shared. There is a digital footprint of every single thing I do online. What I post now can be discoverable when I am an adult and starting my career/family.
29. I will respect others online with my device. I will not access other individuals’ accounts, pictures, files or other data that is not mine.
30. I will not take pictures/videos of others without their permission.
31. I will not share accounts with others or logon to other people’s accounts *with or without* their permission.
32. I will be purposeful when I share/post. I will only share/post content that is meaningful, educational, appropriately funny, or appropriately enjoyable.
33. I will not use technology to be deceptive.
34. I will not use technology to be mean or hurtful to others.
35. I will not hide content on my device(s).
36. I agree to let my parents look at my device at any time and agree to regular and random review of my activity with my device. My device was not given to me to ensure privacy from my parents.
37. I agree to any monitoring program my parents want to have on my device. I agree not to try and deactivate or work around this program.
38. I will talk to my parent(s) if I see something that is concerning, upsetting, makes me feel uncomfortable, or that I don’t understand. I will show them the content and allow them to help me learn what to do.
39. I will talk to my parent(s) if I see a friend who is posting concerning/inappropriate content. I will allow my parent(s) to become involved and help my friend.
40. I will talk to my parent(s) if I see someone I don’t know posting concerning/inappropriate content. I will allow my parent(s) to help find out how to report the content or notify the appropriate professionals.
41. I will role model being a responsible digital citizen with my technology.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_