

ED Home Internet Use Guidelines

This resource is designed to protect your children from harmful effects of unmonitored use of the internet during this time via smartphone/tablets/computers. How this guideline can be implemented may vary depending on age. But please let us be proactive and not reactive on this prevalent issue.

5 Internet Monitoring Approaches for Parents

(<https://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/2011/09/22/5-internet-monitoring-approaches-for-parents/>)

- Spying vs. Ignorance vs. Accountability

In case it isn't obvious, spying on your teen's behavior usually does not engender trust. Sneaking around to find out what they're doing online usually doesn't help you build your relationship with them. We know this instinctively, but why do so many parents do it? They do it because they think there is only one alternative: *Ignorance*. Parents think, "If I don't spy on my kids' Internet activity, then I'll never know what they are doing." Wrong.

Actually, there is another option: *Accountability*. The difference between Spying and Accountability is huge. A child who is accountable *knows* they are being monitored: he or she has bought into the idea that being watched is a good thing.

- Five Ways to Create a Culture of Accountability at Home

1. Use technology to help.

- a. Don't rely on manual monitoring. Not only do kids like to cover their tracks, often manual monitoring is unreliable and sporadic. Instead, use good accountability software (i.e. covenant eyes). This will do a lot of the hard work for you, sending you regular reports of what your kids are doing online.

2. Start early.

- a. If your child grows up in a home where they are not allowed to nurture a secret life online, this will help to establish a pattern of expectations at home.
- b. When they start venturing out on the Internet, remind them that the World Wide Web is like a big city - full of life, fun, but also full of dark alleys.
- c. As a responsible family, we don't want to let each other walk around alone in the big city. We could unknowingly wander into places we shouldn't be or talking to people we shouldn't talk to. This is why Mom and Dad always keep tabs on where you go online. We want to help you go to the best places in the city, not the worst.

3. Model it as an adult.

- a. Let your kids know that we all hold each other accountable. Daddy knows where Mommy is going online. Mommy knows where Daddy is going online. Their lives are open books. They watch each others' backs. They don't keep secrets. That's what people who love each other do.
- b. As they grow up, explain many times to your child: Accountability is just a normal part of success. When Daddy goes to work, he has others hold him accountable while he's on the job. This is because they want to see Daddy get better at his job. The same is true for all things in life.

4. Choose accountability over filtering.

- a. Say this to your teen (if you really mean it): "We choose not to block everywhere you want to go online. Filters are great, but they don't prepare people to live in the real world. We think you can be responsible online. We still monitor everyone's Internet in the house because we want to help each other to be responsible, but we wanted you to have the freedom to go where you want online."
- b. This is an empowering statement. It promotes trust. A statement like this doesn't say: "Be careful because I'm watching you." It says: "We know you understand our expectations about the Internet, but its normal to make mistakes or want to push the limits. We just want to catch small problems before they turn into big problems."
- c. You may think some level of filtering mature content is still necessary because teens can also *unintentionally* access things like pornography. A good filter should have customizable settings to account for the age of your child.

5. Use current events to teach.

- a. Nothing makes your concerns about the Internet real like a good story. Use current event stories about Internet related dangers and temptations to spark good discussions.

- Additional Resource: Covenant-Eyes (<https://www.covenanteyes.com/e-books/>)