

# Staying safe in the cyber-world

With technology developing at an increasingly rapid rate, it is important to remember the following guidelines to ensure your child's wellbeing online.

• **Screen-time**

'Screen-time' refers to how many hours you spent watching TV and playing on the computer.

After new research revealed that more than two hours spent per day of both television viewing and recreational computer use can lead to lower mental health scores, experts around the world agreed that setting a limit of no more than two hours a day was best, and children under two shouldn't have any screen time at all.

Experts suggest parents set clear boundaries and rules regarding screen-time and plan

ahead. Eliminating food and drink from the screen area is also helpful to limiting solo screen-time.

It is important to ensure that your child is also partaking in regular physical activity, which can include an evening walk with the dog or weekend sporting commitments.

• **Digital Citizenship**

Today's children not only need to learn how to be responsible members of society, but also how to behave safely and responsibly online.

Dianne Marshall, who managed the introduction of laptops to all NSW Year Nine public school students, said a good place to start is to follow the same rules for being a good real-world citizen.

"Digital citizenship shares the same val-

ues we teach students to observe in the offline world: obey the law, have respect for others, act civilly and sensibly," Ms Marshall said.

Guidelines for good digital citizenship include areas such as etiquette, literacy, plagiarism and digital security.

• **Health and computers**

There are growing concerns about the potential side effects of children slumped over computers for prolonged periods of time.

Just as with adults, long periods spent staring at a computer screen can lead to eye discomfort, blurred vision and headaches.

Having a bad posture, limited exposure to natural light and not taking regular breaks can also cause problems.

Awareness of psychological issues such as

internet addiction and cyberbullying is also important.

Tips for avoiding computer injury include adjustable chairs, correct posture and screen placement.

• **Cyber-safety**

Keeping your child safe online is easy with a few simple precautions including frequent parental supervision, adult-content filters and higher privacy settings on social networking sites.

Experts also recommend setting a technology curfew and ensuring your child is aware of stranger-danger online. If you suspect your child has been contacted by a predator please call crime stoppers.

Source:  
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