

Too Much Time Online



Maintaining a healthy balance between entertainment media and other activities in their children's lives has always been a challenge for parents. The Internet has made this challenge even more difficult. The engaging nature of Internet communications and interactive games means many children and teens have trouble keeping track of time when they're online. Here are a few tips to help manage time online:

- ◆ As much as possible, keep Internet-connected computers out of your kids' bedrooms. Research shows that young people who have an Internet-connected computer of their own spend twice as much time online as those who share a connection with other family members.
- ◆ Examine your own online habits: how much time are you spending online? As a parent, you are the most important role model for your child.
- ◆ When all else fails, software is available that monitors and restricts Internet use. Although these tools are helpful, they don't replace helping your kids to develop their own self-control, discipline and accountability with regards to their Internet use.

A word about gaming...

Young gamers are especially vulnerable to losing themselves online. In fact, many online role playing games are actually designed to encourage players to continue playing.

- ◆ A good place to start is for parents to check whether there are a minimum weekly number of hours of play required before their child registers with an online game.
- ◆ Understand the elements of online game playing that your child enjoys and try to find other activities that provide similar satisfaction. For example, mastering new skills and belonging to communities are two positive and empowering elements that engage kids and teens.

While parents may be concerned about their children's game playing, it's important to consider other factors before panicking:

- ◆ Is your child involved in a repetitive activity that has little variety or creativity?
- ◆ Does the game take up most of your child's leisure time or take over other activities?
- ◆ Are relationships outside the game (family, friends, romantic relationships) suffering?
- ◆ Is your child obsessed with the game?
- ◆ Does your child's playing persist even though he or she is aware of the problem?
- ◆ Does your child protest (sometimes violently) or become agitated or experience mood swings when unable to play the game?
- ◆ Does your child neglect to wash, take care of personal hygiene or clean up his or her living space?

If your child is demonstrating a number of these symptoms, consider seeking professional help. Compulsive Internet use may be symptomatic of other problems such as depression, anger and low self-esteem.



950 Gladstone Avenue, Suite 120
Ottawa, ON K1Y 3E6
1-800-896-3342
info@media-awareness.ca

www.media-awareness.ca

Media Awareness Network (MNet) is a Canadian not-for-profit centre for media and digital literacy. Its vision is to ensure children and youth possess the necessary critical thinking skills and tools to understand and actively engage with media.

For more tips and information on how to help your kids get the most out of digital media, visit www.bewebaware.ca.