

"I'm putting my phone over here so I won't be distracted and I can focus on you guys. I'm glad to be here!"

"Can you help me pick a fun activity to do during pick up?"

"If you brought a phone, you can put yours in the same place as mine."

"How many minutes should I set on the timer for this activity? Setting a timer helps me stay on track."

"What technology do you have at home? What are the rules around it? Why do you think your parents have those rules?"

"What do you like to play or do most with the technology you have at home?"

"Do you like the way we worship or play music here? Is it too loud or fast?"

"Do you like how bright and loud the screens are? Do we need to adjust?"

"Should we play board games or video games as kids arrive? Why do you think so?"

"We talk a lot about making wise choices here at church. How do you make wise choices with technology?"

A Volunteer's Guide to . . .

Talking About Technology



with Elementary Kids



How to Talk About Technology

In 2021, children between the ages of eight and twelve spent about an hour and a half per day gaming*—approximately one-third of their daily screen time.¹

—————> Elementary-aged kids are drawn to screens. While children often can't wait to have their own devices, they need our help to learn to transition from time using technology and time doing other non-screen activities. Attention is like a muscle that can be strengthened, and middle childhood is a great time to start building healthy habits as they relate to screen time.

The elementary phase is a great opportunity for you as a volunteer to focus even more on face-to-face interaction and creating a community where kids feel seen and valued, in addition to using technology when it is the best choice for your time together each week.

In this Phase . . . As a volunteer, your role is to **engage their interests**. Technology can be used to tap into the natural curiosity and questions kids have. We can also use technology to help kids bond with us through shared experiences (Mario Kart, anyone?) and to connect with friends and family over common interests.

Elementary-aged kids are motivated by fun. We should play as often as possible on their level in ways they like and feel confident in. We can also leverage certain types of technology to teach in engaging ways and build friendships.

In Your Conversations . . .

BEFORE

Honor the parent. Survey the parents of your group to ask what their rules are so that you can respect them and their screen time boundaries in your programming and conversations.

Make it personal. Do a quick evaluation of your own digital footprint. Make sure your accounts reflect the kind of role model and digital citizen you want to be.

Consult with your ministry leader. What are the policies involving kids and technology? Check the age recommendations and reviews before using apps or games with kids. Ask if they have received parental consent around things like taking and sharing photos.

DURING

Choose your words wisely. Pay attention to how you talk about technology because kids in your group may have varying levels of access to technology. Speak in a way that includes everyone and doesn't assume anything.

Think about learning styles. Use (or don't use) technology intentionally to engage kids and help them learn.

Listen closely. Pay attention when kids are discussing what they are doing and seeing online. Be sure to follow up and connect with their family or another appropriate adult if you hear anything concerning.

Set an example. Be intentional about your own engagement with technology. By putting away your phone and being present, you demonstrate healthy habits and boundaries.

AFTER

Follow up with parents and caregivers. If you hear anything concerning to you related to a child's engagement with technology, schedule a time to chat.

Do your research. Become a student of any creators or apps kids share about. By learning more about their interests, you will not only be more equipped to help navigate conversations, but it will show you care about them.

*Note: this average was much higher for boys (over two hours) and lower for girls (just under an hour).

¹Van Kessel, P. et. al. "A Week in the Life of Popular YouTube Channels | Pew Research Center." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, 30 May 2020.