

CYBERSECURITY AND CYBER-RESPONSIBILITY AREN'T TWO CHILDREN' S GAMES:

For a happy and safe childhood

1-Minimum age

You shouldn't expose a baby to screens. When children are a few years old, you can let them use technology. It's important that they know how to use it, but not to do it their principal distraction.

- Own connected device: >13 years old
- Social network accounts and messaging apps: >14-16 years old
- Without parental control: >18 years old

Don't photograph minors and expose them on social networks. If you do it, pixelate their faces. Minors pics may be used by third parties for unethical purposes and even to extortion.

2-Parental control versus education

Parental control systems are fine for restricting some content unsuitable for certain ages. But they aren't an adequate measure when a child has an addiction problem. There are more and more technology addicts now. Many adults and children are connected but alone. It's a big problem, and that problem starts at a younger and younger age.

0) Supervision

You must **administer and supervise** the minors' social networks and sessions. So, you can educate them, prevent them from uploading inappropriate pics, contacting strangers, etc. You should check that they use the technology in common areas at home, but not in isolated rooms.

1) How to differentiate between abusive use and addiction?

Abusive use is when children neglect their tasks (homework,...) eventually. On the other hand, when that abuse becomes frequent, it could be an addiction. That is when the use of technology is their priority. Some symptoms are usually:

- She/he wants to be alone in your bedroom.
- She/he has a low school performance.
- You notice physical fatigue, insomnia, weight problems.
- No social life.
- Aggressiveness or irritability.
- She/he lies about hours spent using technology.

Many children spend an average of **45 hours per week** in front of a screen (TV, smartphone, tablet, PC,...). It isn't a problem that you can solve with a parental control system. It's a problem because you didn't put rules and limitations early (definitively, education).

2) FOMO, Nomophobia y phubbing

Some related problems of an addiction:

- **FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) / Nomophobia:** fear of being disconnected or without battery. Definitely, fear of being OFF.
- **Phubbing:** when you ignore people around you and you focus your attention on the device.

These cases must be avoided with **prevention**.

3) Parental control

To **restrict the usage times and content** that your children can see, you can use the following apps:

- **For Android:** Google Family Link
- **For iOS:** FamiSafe
- **For Windows:** Qustodio
- **For macOS:** KidsGoGoGo
- **For GNU/Linux:** Timekpr+E2guardian
- **For Nintendo Switch:** Nintendo Switch Parental Control options
- **For Xbox:** Family options
- **For PlayStation:** Parental Control/Family Administration options

This way, you can restrict violent or adults content. This content cause problems at an early age.

3-The importance of toys and brain development

The use of toys is necessary for the proper **children's brains development** according to pediatricians, psychiatrists and psychologists. Especially in ages between 8 months and 10 years old (with appropriate games for each age). Replacing toys with screens is a big problem, with possible consequences for their health.

Toys yes, but not IoT toys. IoT toys have functions that could be potentially dangerous for minors. Such as built-in cameras, microphones, etc. Privacy and anonymity should be respected, especially in childhood.

4-Cyberbullying

Bullying has spread beyond schools and public places. Now, it also occurs in the cyberspace. Another dimension needs to be monitored.

1) Symptoms to detect that they are victims of cyberbullying

Normally they won't tell you openly. It's not a simple step. It's painful and a embarrassed situation. But as a parent, you should spot some **symptoms**:

- Sadness or nervousness.
- Demotivation or low self-esteem.

- Deterioration of social relationships.
- Anxiety, irritability, and in extreme cases depression too.
- She/he is obsessed because she/he wants to watch her/his smartphone, tablet or PC alone.
- If your child has suffered episodes of bullying in schools, it's possible that it's also happening in cyberspace.

In these cases you should **contact a professional**.

2) Tips

Follow these **tips** for use new technologies:

- Keeping **things private** is important. You should educate your child to think before posting/sending a message/sharing content.
- If they insult you once, it's not bullying. If that is done repeatedly, then it could be bullying. In either case, let her/him know it isn't her/him fault, because she/he will feel guilty.
- Don't respond to the offense. Stalkers are looking for it. Ignore, report, or block is the best.
- Save the evidence of bullying. It can help you if you want report it.
- Help the victim. For example, you should listen to her/him and try to restore her/his self-esteem.
- In serious cases, a professional (psychologist, report to the authorities,...) must help you.