Parents, take control

In my last article, I talked about how important it is for parents to take charge of their kids' technology usage. However, that can sometimes be easier said than done. As much as I tried to manage my kids when they were using their iPads, it became apparent that I needed help.

One frustration I had was the number of "kid" apps showing up on my devices every time I installed them on my kids' iPads. I had, like many parents, put my own Apple ID on their devices, which meant every app they downloaded also connected to my account.

FAMILY SHARING TO THE RESCUE!

Apple products have made it much easier for parents to manage the content their children see and access on their iPods, iPads and iPhones. One of the best ways to take advantage of these features is to set up a separate Apple ID for each iOS user. This includes even the littlest in your family. If they are old enough for a device, they should have their own Apple ID.

This process is simple: On your own iOS device, go to Settings/iCloud/Family/Add Family Member.

Here you will see an option to Create an Apple ID for a child. Follow the on-screen instructions to create your child's Apple ID. Even though they will now have their own Apple ID, you can control many aspects of their iOS use.

You will need to create a username and password for them, so make sure it is something they can remember. This is important because it saves you the hassle of logging them in every time they want to download something. It also teaches them responsibility for remembering it themselves. Once they have chosen an app to download, you will get a message on your iOS device that they want to download an app and what it costs. You can either approve or deny their request.

CIRCLE BY DISNEY

The other way I manage my kids' time online is by using a device called Circle by Disney. With the Circle, I can restrict the amount of time my kids have access to the internet, turn on or off access to specific websites or apps, and set a bedtime to deactivate the internet. This will automatically turn the internet off at a set time, not turning it back on until a set time in the morning. The great thing about this is it only affects my kids' devices, not anyone else's in the house. However, you can restrict access to every device connected to your router if you wish. You also can "pause" the internet for the whole house at meal times or whenever you want the family to disconnect.

The ability to turn off or on specific websites and apps can be helpful when your child needs to finish homework online but tends to be sidetracked by other sites. Now you can be sure they only have access to the sites they need for schoolwork until they finish their assignment.

The internet is important for your family, but it's also important to manage what is being accessed and how much time is spent online. Hopefully these tips will make it more manageable for you.

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Parenting Tip

Circle pairs with your home Wi-Fi and lets you manage every device on your network, both wireless and wired, without ever needing to put software on them. It's available for $99 at Target, Amazon, Best Buy and Disney Stores. **For more information visit meetcircle.com.**