

# Customizable Device Contract

## Things to keep in mind...

Before creating a family contract about your kid's personal or school-issued device, talk about how the device will be used at home. Use the suggested guidelines below to help make sure that you and your kid are on the same page. Then use the customizable form to outline your agreed-upon expectations.

## Where, When, & How Long?

- **Decide where you're comfortable having your kid use the device.** Can they only use it in family spaces, like a family room or kitchen? Can they bring it into their bedroom or the bathroom? Can they use it at the dinner table?
- **Consider the difference between using a device for homework and using it for entertainment.** Your kid's school may have specific policies for what a device is to be used for and by whom (e.g., no siblings!).
- **Talk about what it means to "balance" time spent with technology, media, and other activities.** What are some steps your family can take to balance screen time with face-to-face time? Do you want to make the dinner table a device-free zone, in which no family member (not even the adults) may use a cell phone, tablet, or computer? Do you want to set a curfew for when devices need to be shut off?

## Checking In

- **Explain that as the parent or caregiver, part of your job is to guide them.** Identify ways to maintain open, honest communication with your kids about their device.
- **Discuss how you'll monitor the device.** Do you want to check up on your kid's activity? If so, how? Will you ask your kid to give you access to emails, texts, and IMs? Will you review his or her search history (which can be deleted) from time to time?
- **Talk with your kid about the kinds of apps they'll be using and accounts they'll have.** Ask them to show you their favorites, as well as the ones they use most. How do they work? What's so cool about them? How do these tools support their learning?

## Privacy Settings

- **Practice creating a strong password together.** Use at least eight characters (mixing letters, numbers, and symbols) and avoid including any private information such as names, addresses, birth dates, etc. Remember to have your kid write down usernames and passwords and keep the information stored in a safe place.
- **Discuss the importance of not sharing passwords with others,** and decide whether parents should be an exception to the rule. One idea is to have kids create their own passwords but then keep them accessible to parents in a sealed envelope for emergencies.
- **Review privacy policies and privacy settings together.** Make sure your kids understand what private and personal information companies may or may not be collecting. Decide how public or private an audience you all are comfortable with when it comes to sharing and posting.

## Care & Maintenance

- **Discuss what you consider to be responsible care and maintenance of what are often expensive tools.** Where will the device be stored and charged at home? Why is it important to treat the device gently and not shove it into a backpack?
- **Outline the responsibility factor.** Discuss what will happen and who's responsible if the device gets stolen, lost, or broken — even if by accident.

## Communicating Responsibly Online

- **Talk about the difference between using the device to communicate with classmates for school-related work and using it for hanging out** or goofing off with friends. What are the school's guidelines for appropriate use? How will you enforce similar expectations at home?
- **Discuss your family rules for social networking and messaging** – with people they know, sort of know, or don't know at all. What does it mean to be respectful to and respected by others? What does that look like? Use this as a springboard for a discussion about cyberbullying, privacy, and safety.

# Our Contract

This contract outlines my family's expectations for how I use my device at home. We agreed upon the following:

## Where, When, & How Long

We talked about what it means to use the device appropriately and respectfully at home. We agree to:

## Checking In

We talked about how we, as a family, will stay involved in how the device is used and what it's used for. We agree to:

## Privacy Settings

We talked about what kinds of accounts I'll have and how I can best protect my private information. We agree to:

## Care & Maintenance

We talked what it means to take good care of my device at home, and what might happen if it's broken, stolen, or lost. We agree to:

## Communicating Responsibly Online

We talked about the different ways I might communicate with other people using my device, and what safe, responsible, and respectful communication looks like. We agree to:

X  
\_\_\_\_\_  
signed by me

X  
\_\_\_\_\_  
signed by my parent or caregiver