

# Media Guidelines for Parents

*(Reviewed/Revised 4/28/26 hms)*

## Grades TK-5

Electronic screen media (TV, movies, video games, computers, tablets, smart phones, iPods, etc.) is a prominent feature of modern American life. The Waldorf educational approach practiced at Stone Bridge School asserts that while instruction in and use of these devices is appropriate in later grades, exposure to electronic media in Grades K-5 detrimentally affects a child's imagination, healthy development, and social interactions. This position is corroborated by the American Academy of Pediatrics and current childhood research. Children are deeply affected by everything in their environment. Television, video games and other electronic media have a lasting influence on children's behavior, development, and school performance as well as on their peers' school experiences.

Our faculty recognizes that media viewing falls in the domain of family life and that it is the parents who will decide what role electronic media will play in their children's life. As part of the community of Stone Bridge School, which is a school of choice, we ask families to limit their children's exposure to screens and to commit to seeking out alternative activities fully involving their children's capacities to develop a healthy mind, emotional life, and physical body. We strongly prefer that children in grades K-5 not use electronic media; we specifically ask that they not use electronic media on school days/evenings.

In order to facilitate well-informed decision making regarding the role of electronic media in your family's life, we encourage you to explore media's effect on the developing brain. Below is an article to start your search:

"Children, Adolescents, and the Media" Policy Statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/132/5/958.full?sid=a00db594-ee22-4268-9b7c-baea710d209e>

## Grades 6 - 8

Social media and the devices/technology through which we access them continue to proliferate in our society. Many children are growing up with significant Internet exposure via YouTube, social media sites, smart phones, online gaming, and an ever-expanding array of choices. While there are power and convenience in these technologies, parents are increasingly challenged to monitor and manage their children's media experiences. Parental concerns generally revolve around the amount of time online, age-appropriate content, and issues regarding privacy, and potential victimization (e.g., cyberbullying).

The staff and faculty of Stone Bridge School also share concerns about these technologies and their effects on our middle school students' social, intellectual, and emotional development. While many of these students are adept at using these technologies, their social skills and

developmental level are not yet sophisticated enough for the on-line freedom frequently available to them. For these reasons, the SBS faculty suggests the following parental guidelines:

- **Establish family rules that clarify when and where a digital device is appropriate.**

For example, consider requiring all family members to stow their digital devices when:

- Talking face-to-face with another person
- Sharing a meal together
- Attending school performances, meetings, and activities
- Doing homework
- Preparing for bed

The above practices emphasize the value of face-to-face, interpersonal interactions. It has been remarked that Stone Bridge graduates excel in their abilities to interact with others in a genuine, present, and articulate manner. It is our belief that this is supported by significant *personal* interaction with other students and adults.

These guidelines also support your child's ability to concentrate, requiring them to do homework without the distraction of texting, chatting, or online games. It is strongly recommended that digital devices not be allowed in bedrooms or bathrooms where their use cannot be monitored. Computers used for homework are best accessed in a public space (e.g., the living room or kitchen).

Electronic lights have been shown to disrupt the chemicals in the brain, making it more difficult to fall asleep and sleep soundly. It is recommended that children "dock" their devices in living room or kitchen chargers (away from temptation) at least thirty minutes before bedtime.

- **Supervise and monitor your child's use of digital devices.**

We feel that online behavior should be as exemplary as person-to-person behavior, and that important values (honesty, compassion, discretion) are maintained in both arenas. With the reality that online behavior and communications are generally not considered private, it is vital that our children understand that anything communicated online has the potential to be public forever. These are critical points to make with your child.

To ensure the above, it is important to supervise and monitor your child's use of digital devices by asking for your child's passwords in order to be aware of his/her online communications. As your child demonstrates digital responsibility and citizenship over time, you will likely negotiate trust, but we recommend retaining your prerogative to check in on their use of digital media.

We also acknowledge that monitoring children's use of "smart phones" is extremely difficult. For this reason, we recommend that your child not use a phone that connects to the Internet until he or she reaches high school.

- **Ask your child to seek your help immediately when something goes wrong.**

Children make mistakes. This is how they (and we) learn. Assure them that they will not be punished for any online mistake or miscommunication, but that it is critical that they tell you about it. Help them be comfortable seeking adult help to repair damaged relationships or address unintended consequences resulting from media misuse.

- **Model the digital behavior you expect from your child.**

Children learn more from ‘what we do’ than ‘what we say’. They also have a keen sense for what is “unfair.” Consequently, it is critical that adults enforce the rules set for our children and *model responsible use of our own digital devices* with regard to our interpersonal relationships and use of time. Emphasize that digital devices, while powerful tools, can also be a distraction from fully living our lives.

The teachers and staff at Stone Bridge School realize that the well-being and education of your children is a partnership and encourage you to discuss your concerns, thoughts, and experiences regarding media usage with your child’s teacher(s). We can all benefit from the breadth of experience and knowledge that resides within our entire community, and together ensure that our students leave Stone Bridge School with the skills, common sense, and values necessary for navigating the complexities of the wider world.

- **For more information:**

"Phonewise Boot Camp for Parents" - <https://courses.devorahheitner.com/>