

A Fire-Safety “Adulthood” Challenge: #SpicyPillow Audit



In the near future, your teens may be living in a dorm or their first apartment. One of the most important safety skills they can learn now is how to manage the tech they rely on every day.

Phones, laptops and e-scooters are safe when used properly – but damaged batteries can fail fast and start intense fires. This activity helps teens build habits that protect their devices, their space and their future home.

Step 1 – Set the Challenge

Frame this as a tech upgrade and life skills challenge, not a chore.

What to say:

“Let’s do a quick audit of your everyday tech. This helps your devices last longer and keeps your future apartment safe.”

Tell them the goal:

Audit your everyday carry:

- Phone/Earbuds/headphones
- Laptop/tablet
- Gaming gear or e-scooter
- Charging cables and power banks



Step 2 – Teach the Term: “Spicy Pillow”

A “**Spicy Pillow**,” an online term for a swollen lithium-ion battery. When batteries fail, gas builds up inside and makes them bulge. This is a serious fire hazard and a warning sign that the device should stop being used immediately.

Step 3 – Do the Audit Together

Turn this into a quick inspection checklist you complete side-by-side.

Step 4 – Make It Worth Their While

Create a simple incentive:

If your teen finds damaged cables or unsafe chargers, replace them with certified or original chargers.

This makes the activity feel like a tech upgrade – not a lecture.

Step 5 – The Teen Safety Briefing

Keep this short and practical.

The Heat Rule

Heat is the biggest enemy of batteries.

Charging on beds, couches or under pillows traps heat and increases fire risk. Charge on hard, flat surfaces only.

What do say:

“Heat is the #1 enemy of battery health. Charging on your bed, couch, or under a pillow is like putting your phone in an oven. Hard, flat surfaces only. Also, keep charging tech away from exits—if a fire starts, you don't want it blocking your escape route.”





The Overnight Rule

Avoid charging overnight or when no one is home. Charge while you're awake and unplug once fully charged.

What to say:

"Charging overnight or while you're out is risky. It stresses the battery cells. Try to charge while you're awake and nearby. Once it hits 100%, unplug it. If it starts to hiss or smell weird, you need to be awake to react."

The Certified Gear Rule

Avoid cheap, uncertified charging cables.

Look for Canadian certification marks (CSA, cUL, cETL) or use original manufacturer chargers.

What to say:

"Don't trust \$5 dollar store cables; they lack the safety chips to regulate power. Look for Canadian certification marks (CSA, cUL, or cETL). Using the original cable ensures your battery doesn't enter its 'villain arc' and fail on you."

The Disposal Rule

Lithium-ion batteries never go in the garbage or recycling bin.

Damaged batteries must go to a household hazardous waste or electronics recycling depot.

What to say:

"A lithium-ion battery in a garbage truck is a literal bomb. If it gets crushed, it explodes. These are household hazardous waste. If we find a 'Spicy Pillow,' we take it to a real recycling drop-off, never the trash."



Step 6 – Connect It to “Adulthood”

Wrap up with the real-life message:

“In a few years, you’ll be responsible for your own space. Learning to manage your tech safely now helps protect your future home, roommates and neighbours.”

THE #SpicyPillow CHECKLIST

Screen Lift: Is your device lifting or bulging?
This is a major warning sign.

Heat Test: Does the device get too hot to hold comfortably? *If yes, stop using it and investigate.*

Smell Test: Any sweet, chemical or metallic smell? That can mean battery damage.

Cable Check: Look for frayed wires, burn marks or bent connectors.

Storage Check: Are spare batteries and devices stored in a cool, dry place?
Batteries should never be charged below 0°C.



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