

HOMEWORK FOR PARENTS

A new school year means new digital challenges. This 10-minute homework is here to help you build healthy tech habits, set up effective parental controls, and have open, non-judgmental conversations about your child's online world, so they know they can come to you when something goes wrong.

01 – ALWAYS-ON ANXIETY

The pressure to be permanently connected can be exhausting. Group chats, social media notifications, gaming lobbies, shared stories: for secondary school students, being unreachable can feel like social failure. Many young people admit to checking their phones in the middle of the night, not because they want to, but because they feel they have to. This can result in poor sleep and rising anxiety for many children.

YOUR HOMEWORK:

What are three phone-free moments or zones your family will agree on together?

1.

2.

3.

EE tip: EE's free in-store online safety appointments can show you how to set up Screen Time (iOS) or Digital Wellbeing (Android) including bedtime wind-down modes and daily app limits.



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02 – AFTER THE SUMMER, HEALTHY ROUTINES HAVE DISAPPEARED

The return to school after a long holiday can expose just how far routines have drifted...bedtimes become later, screen time increases and gaming sessions run longer. The important thing is to deliberately reset routines before school begins, rather than expecting children to switch overnight from summer habits to school habits. That might mean gradually bringing bedtime forward, establishing device-free periods, agreeing where phones charge overnight, and talking together about what healthy technology use is going to look like during term time.

YOUR HOMEWORK:

Write three specific routines you will deliberately reset before the new term begins.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

EE tip: Set up a family agreement that you all sign up to, managing expectations around daily screen time limits and carving out time for device-free activities, like mealtimes or family hangouts.

03 – WHAT THEY'RE SEEING ONLINE

Parental controls help, but the real safety net is a child who knows they can come to you. 68% of parents say exposure to adult or harmful content is their biggest online concern. What might surprise you: 48% of teenagers share that worry. The challenge is that device-level controls alone aren't enough, young people access content through friends' phones, school networks, and apps that update faster than filters can keep pace. EE recommends a layered approach: network level, device level, and within individual apps. But the most powerful layer is trust. Young people who know they won't be blamed are far more likely to tell you when they've seen something that scared or confused them.

YOUR HOMEWORK:

Write three steps you'll take to set up layered protections, one at network level, one on the device itself and one within an app your child uses.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

EE tip: EE's A-B-C checklist: Activate controls across network, device and apps. Balance screen time with meaningful offline activity. Check in and Chat regularly make it normal and not a big deal.



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04 – WHAT TIME DID YOUR PHONE GO TO BED?

The question parents need to start asking has changed. Unchecked screen use can leave young people exhausted. Even if they go to bed at a reasonable time, messaging, gaming and scrolling can keep them awake late into the night. Teachers nationwide report that students have been known to rack up over 12 hours of screen time between 3pm and arriving at school the next morning. Lack of sleep can affect concentration, memory, emotions and behaviour, with some students even falling asleep in lessons. For parents, the question is no longer just, "What time did you go to bed?" but, "What time did your phone go to bed?"

YOUR HOMEWORK:

Write three practical steps that would help your child's bedroom become a space for sleep again.

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EE tip: Charging phones outside the bedroom is the single most effective change families report. EE's free in-store online safety appointments can show you how to set bedtime wind-down modes on iOS and Android, so the phone powers down even when willpower doesn't.

YOUR HOMEWORK:

Write three platforms or apps your child currently uses that you'd like to explore together, then agree a date to look at them side by side.

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EE tip: Not sure where to start? EE's in-store Parents' Evening sessions walk families through the current digital landscape, what the ban means in practice, which platforms to know about, and how to have the conversation at any age.

05 – LIFE AFTER THE SOCIAL MEDIA BAN

The platforms are changing, and young people are already one step ahead. The government's Social Media (Minimum Age) Act introduces a ban for under-16s and curfew restrictions for 16-17-year-olds. It's a significant shift, but it won't remove risk. Many young people are already identifying alternative platforms to migrate to once the ban comes into force. EE's guidance is age-specific: restricted access for under-13s; monitored, linked accounts for 13-16-year-olds; and for older teenagers, supported autonomy to help them recognise risk themselves. Wherever your child sits on that spectrum, the best investment is time spent online together.



Want to go further? Book a free online safety appointment at your nearest EE store, or visit ee.co.uk/internet-online-safety or eephonesmart.co.uk to access EE's full suite of online safety tools and parental guides.