



Be MediaWise

Don't let technology replace the human connection

Converting to an All-Digital World

HDTV (high definition television) and SDTV (standard definition television) are revolutionizing the world of TV. On February 17, 2009 federal law requires that all full power broadcasting stations in the US stop broadcasting on analog airwaves and broadcast only in digital. If you have only an analog TV set and do not have cable, you will need an HDTV or digital converter box in order to continue to enjoy television programs. But you'll need to prepare your family in other ways, too.



As stations go all-digital, the lines formerly separating different kinds of media will quickly disappear, since our TV sets will be transmitting the same signals as the Internet, cell phones, and other digital devices. Digital is a more efficient transmission technology that allows broadcast stations to offer improved pictures and sound quality, as well as more programming options for consumers—but this digital convergence means a whole lot more. In this all-digital world kids will be able to watch their favorite movie on demand, set up a personalized online shopping trip, play online games, and chat with their friends—all from a comfortable perch in front of the TV.

Be informed about what this technology change can mean, and make sure you are prepared to maximize the benefits and minimize the harm to your kids of this new streamlined digital world.

"Going Digital" Parent Guide (adapted) at www.MediaFamily.org



It's getting harder and harder to find movies that are suitable for our adolescents. We want

them to be entertained, but we don't want them to be exposed to profanity, graphic violence, nudity, sexual content or world views that differ significantly from the ones we teach at home.

It's a huge dilemma, and making choices for and with our kids about the kinds of movies they can see is further complicated by peer pressure. If "all the kids" are going to see an R-rated movie, why can't they? Talk to people you trust (other parents, youth ministers) or slip out and preview the movie he wants to see, then sit down with your child and read its reviews. Of course you'll want reviews from a reliable source (such as The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' www.USCCB.org/movies/current.shtml) - one that will give you an assessment of the movie's content, and not just studio hype.

www.iMom.com (Adapted)

Getting Ready to Go All-Digital: A Parent Checklist

- Limit total screen time.**
- Set and enforce a family policy on the use of rating systems** for TV, movies, and games.
- Learn how to use the parental controls** on all cell phones, computers, video games and televisions.
- Talk with your children about what information is private** and should not be shared online.
- Visit www.MediaWise.net** to complete a "Going Digital Parent Worksheet" and to download and fill out an Internet Respect Plan.
- Keep televisions in a common space** in your home, rather than in a bedroom.
- Decide what features you'll include in your child's cell phone plan**—and stick to them.
- Practice "appointment television."** Decide in advance what's worthwhile to watch.
- If you own an analog TV, get a converter box.** Go to www.dtv.gov for more information.
- Support your child's school's cell phone policy.**

Is your child bored or busy?



Most children today are at one end of the pendulum or the other. They are either really bored... watching four hours of television a day or playing video games until their fingers drop off. Or, they are really busy... hitting the books until late at night, running from one sport to another, and sending out a thousand text messages a day. Neither excess is healthy. The pendulum should be somewhere in the middle—it's called balance.

So monitor your kids. Make sure they have enough down time and time with you.

www.FamilyFirst.net

Vocabulary Corner



Do your kids' electronic messages look like Greek to you? Do you

wonder and worry about what they mean? Here are some common phrases to help you be aware of what's being communicated:

- ADN** any day now
- AYS?** are you serious?
- BFF** best friends forever
- IDK** I don't know
- IRL** in real life
- JK** just kidding
- MYOB** mind your own business
- NIMBY** not in my back yard
- NP** no problem
- OIC** oh, I see
- RBTL** read between the lines
- WYWH** wish you were here

See [f@stcht/A Quick Guide to the Abbreviated Language of Instant Messaging](#) for more chat abbreviations.

Going All-Digital—What It Means

For Smart TV:

It really won't make sense any more to "see what's on TV," because digital programming provides almost unlimited options, making everything "on" all the time. Far from being passive viewers, 21st century kids will be able to create their own "smart channels" that are customized to their preferences, allowing kids easy access to favorite channels and social online groups where they can chat, write reviews, share with friends, and rate shows.



What to Celebrate:

Creative content. Difficult to find documentaries, educational shows and more will be available at the click of a mouse rather than via a costly cable package.

Appointment television. It will be easier to plan and watch specific, worthwhile shows.

Smart Channels. You can gain more control with viewer created Smart Channels that aggregate age-appropriate content to watch with your kids, as well as chat about with parents.

What to Watch Out For:

Targeted commercials. Advertisers can create targeted ads based on your child's preferences and viewing history.

Anytime, anywhere. Wherever there's an Internet connection, TV viewing is possible.

Difficult to monitor. Unlimited access to TV via phones, laptops, and other digital devices is even harder to monitor than a screen in the family room.

For Cell Phones:



It's been awhile since cell phones just made phone calls. But with digital convergence, it will be easier than ever to get online and watch movies and TV on your cell. A dizzying number of entertainment features popular with teens are already accessible through phones. So far, limited memory and expense have kept these features from being mainstream. But as digital convergence accelerates, it will be easier than ever to play music, watch and upload videos, access GPS software, take and upload pictures, and play video games on your cell.

What to Celebrate:

Staying in touch. We all lead busy lives, and sometimes a check-in phone call or text message is just the thing to stay connected and up-to-date.

Budgeting. Helping kids plan a budget, select a plan and stick to it is a great way to teach saving and prioritizing (even if you share a piece of the bill).

Parental controls. With more forms of media

converging in one device, it can be easier to manage total screen time.

What to Watch Out For:

24-7 screen time. It's hard to limit screen time on a device that fits into a kid's pocket. Make and enforce rules about the amount of time kids can spend on their phones, regardless of the activity.

School disruption. Know and support your school's cell phone policy.

Misplaced manners. Make sure your kids understand that face-to-face conversation precedes a call or text message. Set expectations on when and where digital activities are allowed, with a special emphasis on safety and etiquette.



For Gaming:

As digital convergence accelerates, gaming will become an increasingly integrated experience—combining social networking, mobile entertainment, and episodic content. As the lines between games and online social networking continue to blur, creating avatars (online 3-D personas), joining online tournaments, and chatting with friends from around the world will be part and parcel of the video game experience. With the ease of digital distribution, more game publishers will sell games in a sequence of episodes. Players will either pay a single subscription fee or pay per-episode to download new "chapters" containing content, "weapons," and plot lines. While this can make play more fun, it also poses new challenges for rating games, and makes play difficult to monitor.

What to Celebrate:

Creative content. New technologies make it easier for amateurs to design and share games online.

Parental controls. The new generation consoles have excellent parental controls to limit screen time and manage online gaming.

Problem solving. Many of the most popular online games are fantasy-adventures that require players to solve problems and engage in logical reasoning. Look for these instead of first person shooter games.

What to Watch Out For:

Addiction. With a strong social component, endless "worlds," and team play, online games can be difficult to quit.

Online predators. Just like any online social environment, kids playing online games are at risk of being targeted by Internet predators.

Bad netiquette. Some kids spend more time making fun of others than they do advancing in the game. Talk to your children about cyberbullying.

"Going Digital" Parent Guide (adapted) at www.MediaFamily.org