



Protect your Scout in the Digital Age

A guide for Parents and Unit Leaders

Greater Alabama Council
Boy Scouts of America
www.1bsa.org

Children today are exposed, often at a young age, to inappropriate digital content, harmful language, online predators, cyber-bullying and the constant onslaught of the connected life we live. Parents and Scout leaders alike must work together to protect the youth served in Scouting. While it is impossible to fully shield your scout from inappropriate content on the Internet, with the right tools, the right conversation and the right frame of mind, we can prepare them to deal with this issue.

This resource is intended to be a starting point, to initiate a dialogue in your family and in your scouting unit.

Consider these facts:

- American teens use an average of 9 hours of media daily, not including for school or homework
- 6 out of 10 girls are exposed to porn before the age of 18.
- 9 out of 10 boys are exposed to porn before the age of 18.
- The first exposure to pornography is 12 years old, on average.
- Nearly 80% of unwanted exposure to pornography takes place in the home.
- 19% of teens report having been bullied either in person, online, by text, or by phone.
- A study from the Pew Research Center reports that the average teen sends and receives 67 text messages per day.
- 16% of all teen cellphone users say they have received a sexually suggestive photo or video of someone they know.

Age-Appropriate Dialogue

Parents must have a conversation with their children about what they may be exposed to, whether in a digital form, social media, or in person. According to Cox Communications Inc. and their Internet Safety Survey: *“Children whose parents and guardians regularly talk to them about personal safety are more likely to exhibit responsible behavior on their own.”* In addition experts think it’s important for parents to talk to their kids about what porn is, keep the conversation honest, and loving. (Source:

www.fightthenewdrug.org) A great resource to consider is *The Guideline :A Parent’s Guide to Addressing Pornography with children*. Available as a free download on:

www.fightthenewdrug.org. Other resources available include the BSA Cyber Chip and a series of Parents Guides to protecting your children from child abuse, both are available on www.scouting.org.

Resources for Protecting your child

There are a variety of apps, websites, and tools available that will help protect your child, none of these are 100% fool proof, but a well thought out strategic use of these tools with the appropriate dialogue can make a huge difference.

Websites

[www.scouting.org\youthprotection](http://www.scouting.org/youthprotection)

http://undoneredone.com/resources_mysecurefamily/

<http://www.scouting.org/cyberchip>

www.fightthenewdrug.org

www.staysafeonline.org

www.teensafe.org

<http://www.netsmartz.org/scouting>

Apps

Bark- your family watchdog for internet safety. This app monitors, detects and alerts you of problems. Available on the Apple App store and on Google Play. www.bark.us

Net Nanny – Parental control software, available for PC's, Mac's, IOS & Android devices. Filters and blocks content. www.netnanny.com

SecureTeen - giving you your kids call logs, and possibly even more important, allows you to read their incoming and outgoing text messages. So you'll not only know who they are communicating with, but also who may be trying to engage them. Available for IOS, Android and PC. www.secureteen.com

Safety Central – NCMEC – protecting your family is a little easier with Safety Central. Developed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, <http://www.missingkids.org/safety>

Hardware

Disney Circle – Circle is a 3-inch white cube that connects to your Wi-Fi network. The \$99 device allows you to filter content, add time restrictions, and see activity reports for every device on your network

Install a Second Router or a Wi-Fi extender – By installing a second router or a Wi-Fi extender you can give your children the password for it to use for connecting, then set the router up on a timer or a outlet you can program to turn off. Then you simply turn off the router when you want to limit access to the Internet.

Dealing with Technology in the Local Unit

If your unit does not have a technology policy, you may want to have a discussion with your parents, chartered organization and fellow scout leaders to see what they think.

A great suggestion on the BSA blog, Bryan on Scouting, is that the technology policy for any unit should be based on the Scout Law. See the full post here:

<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2015/05/04/this-troops-excellent-technology-policy-is-based-on-the-scout-law/>

In general the following is suggested:

- Use the technology to build relationships with the troop, find useful information, communicate and share excitement about Scouting.
- Updates to social sites using appropriate, (non-embarrassing), photos or clips can share and build excitement about Scouting.
- Don't let technology detract from the outdoor experience, the program experience, or the Scouting experience for the troop or patrol.

Typically, unit technology policies range from; No electronic devices allowed, at all, only allowed to and from events or outings, OK , but with certain restrictions, Not just allowed – but encouraged! We offer the following considerations:

- An absolute no technology or electronic devices ever, may be a bit extreme for most scouts; this may be a big turn off and a barrier to joining your unit. Obviously if this works for your unit, then go for it, but you might want to consider a more

flexible policy with strict guidelines and agreements with scouts and parents.

- A good middle ground may be to allow the electronic device, but have a agreed upon plan on taking up the technology at the beginning and returning it at the end of the outing, or consider at least not allowing the electronic device in the tent at night.
- Develop a contract that the scout, parent and the unit leader sign, outlining the technology policy for your unit. The Scout Law and Cybersafety/Cyberbullying can be used as a great template for that contract.

Technology is here, whether we like it or not, and Scouting can be a leader in making sure we keep our scouts safe from the ugly side of technology. We encourage each unit to have a discussion on this subject, include the Scouts, parents, unit leaders and chartered organizations. The safety of our scouts may very well depend on you taking action today!

Please contact the Greater Alabama Council, Boy Scouts of America at 1-205-970-0251 if you need help in developing your unit's technology policy.

Note: Listing of the website's, apps, software and hardware in this document is in no way an endorsement of these products, the Greater Alabama Council and the Boy Scouts of America does not receive any monetary benefit from any of these products. These are commonly recommended tools that we think parents should know about. If you know of others we should list, please let us know.

