Screens at home

MANAGE, EDUCATE AND GUIDE



PARENTS' GUIDE

BEE SECURE

einfach digital
Zukunftskompetenze
fir staark Kanner

LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale,
de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse
Service national de la jeunesse

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INTRODUCTION

Children and adolescents are growing up in a world where **the digital sphere is an integral part of their environment**. With the Internet all over the house and now thanks to touchscreens, even the youngest children can use smartphones and tablets.

For parents, **this raises numerous questions**: *What's the right age to give my child their first smartphone? Should there be a television or gaming console in my child's bedroom? Should screens be completely off-limits or should they be allowed with a time limit? Should my child be allowed to use digital devices alone? How can I protect my child from abuse and cyberbullying? How can I help my child acquire the digital skills that they will need as an adult in the job market?*

These topics are hotly debated, not just among parents, but among educators and scientists as well. Moreover, the constant evolution of the digital world makes it hard to obtain well-founded evidence to support objective arguments. As far as the effects of digital media are concerned, the science is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, **we would still like to offer some clarity** on the various points of view on this topic. This guide offers an overview of the latest scientific research and **a positive approach towards the use of digital media**. You will also find **concrete tips** for your own digital media use and information to help you guide your children in a thoughtful and positive way.



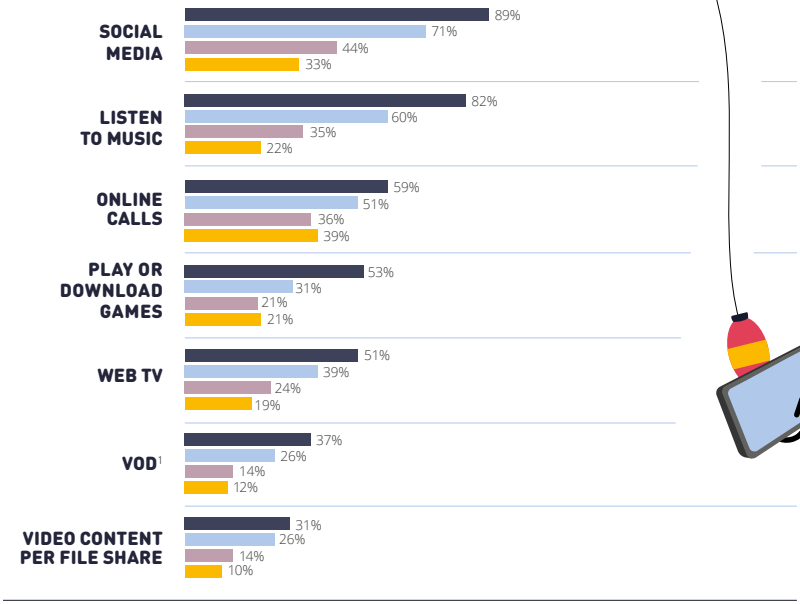
1. SCREEN USE BY CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Doing homework on the computer, chatting with friends on a smartphone, playing video games, Skyping with grandma on a tablet and watching TV with the family in the evening. At the end of the day, that's a lot of time spent in front of screens. But what exactly do we know about the use of screens by children and young people?

According to STATEC, 99% of 16-24 year olds in Luxembourg use the Internet almost daily, mostly on smartphones (88%) and laptops (74%). The majority use it to access social networks (89%) or to listen to music (82%). Other favorite online activities among young people include calling (59%) and playing or downloading games (53%).

There is also a difference between genders: 66 percent of boys say they play online or download games, whereas only 39 percent of girls say they do. When it comes to health-related questions, girls are more likely to search the Internet (60%) than boys (38%). In general, no other age group uses the Internet as much this one does.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT ON THE WEB FOR PRIVATE PURPOSES BY AGE GROUP, 2018



Source : STATEC - Enquête sur l'utilisation des TIC auprès des ménages et des individus - 2018

According to a 2017 UNICEF study[2], one in three Internet users is a minor. Yet most content online is tailored to the needs and capacities of adults. Your child may have grown up with the Internet and digital media, but that is not to say that they were born with superpowers to know how to use it safely and wisely. Therefore, **as in all areas of their life, your child needs you to provide guidance on how to use the Internet in a safe, responsible and positive way!**

[1] Video On Demand

[2] UNICEF Children in a Digital World. New York, 2017. 215 pages. PDF Document www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2017_ENG_WEB.pdf

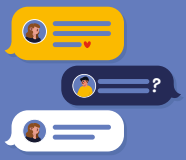
2. THE POSSIBILITIES OF DIGITAL MEDIA



The Internet is a mine of information



The Internet allows us to discover ourselves



The Internet eliminates physical barriers for contact



Playing online games can help children develop useful skills



Digital media expands the possibilities to learn

- Cognitive skills (logical and strategic thinking, concentration, planning for action, foresight, memory, etc.)
- Social skills (team spirit, communication, interaction, etc.)
- Sensorimotor skills (reaction, dexterity, hand-eye coordination, movement, etc.)
- Media literacy (software knowledge, media criticism, creativity, etc.)
- Linked to personality (self-esteem, question oneself, etc.)



3. RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SCREEN USE

Screen use can have an impact on sleep

It is estimated that young people need about 9 hours of sleep a night for proper growth. Today, the average young person gets about 6.5 hours of sleep per night. **A lack of sleep can not only cause irritability and reduced performance**, it can also lead to **a higher risk of health problems**.

Ninety percent of all studies on the subject have demonstrated that screen time has a significant negative impact on sleep. People who spend a lot of time in front of screens go to bed later, sleep less, take longer to fall asleep, wake up more often during the night and/or are tired throughout the day. However, the type of screen use that causes the most sleep disturbance has not yet been identified.

The influence of "blue light" is also a subject of debate. It is a fact that **the blue light produced by screens reduces the production of melatonin**. Melatonin is the hormone that regulates our day-night rhythm. When it is not produced in sufficient amounts, it **can have a negative impact on our sleep**. While the link between the two factors has been proven, there is no proof that blue light actually causes insomnia.





Screen use can contribute to weight gain

There is a link between increased screen time and weight gain in children. Eating in front of the television, for example, may cause children to eat more because they do not notice that they are no longer hungry. However, you can easily reverse this trend:

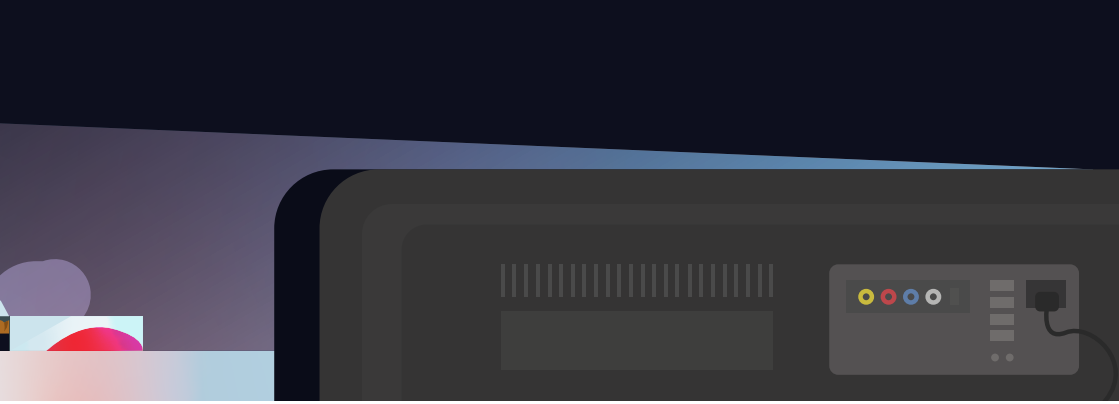
- reduce the amount of snacks in the house.
- have screen-free meals.
- while children are watching TV or playing video games, offer them healthy food (fruits, vegetables, unsalted nuts).

Digital media and games can be addictive

Some parents worry that their children spend too much time in front of screens and neglect other activities, such as non-digital games, schoolwork, sports or time with friends. Science cannot clearly confirm whether such a shift in priorities is actually taking place.

Less time spent in front of screens does not, for example, encourage children to exercise more. Of course, it is also important to consider the amount of time screens are used and the nature of online activities. Excessive Internet use may lead to reduced participation in a club or sports associations, while moderate use may, on the contrary, lead to greater participation. Let's not forget that young people also form and maintain relationships online. At the same time, however, games are generally programmed to encourage as much playing as possible.

Thus, there is always a risk of addiction or dependence.



However, according to the World Health Organization, addiction only develops when the concerned person is no longer able to control the amount of time they spend gaming at the expense of other interests and daily activities. The negative effects on well-being, school performance and social contacts will not lead them to reduce the excessive consumption.

If you have any questions on this subject or if you need some advice, you can contact the "Game Over"[2] service offered by **Anonym Glécksspiller a.s.b.l.**

Screen use can harm a child's development

The use of **non-interactive screens** (Television, YouTube, etc.) can be particularly **harmful for children under the age of 3**. The first studies in this field have already demonstrated that these types of screens can have negative consequences on language development and lead to weight gain. The most important thing at this age is the discovery of the environment and human relationships through play, touch, movement and orienting oneself in a three-dimensional space. In front of the television, the child is passive and subjected to artificial sounds and colours that they are not yet able to assimilate at a young age.

Even programmes that aim to develop language do not actually teach children how to speak, as they cannot replace human interaction. Direct viewing can have negative effects, but so can playing in a room where a television is on. **Avoid exposing children under the age of 3 to screens as much as possible**.

[2] www.gameover.lu/projekt.html

4. LIMITING SCREEN TIME IS NOT A SOLUTION BY ITSELF

It can be tempting to rely on expert statements or recommendations to determine a maximum amount of screen time for children per day or per week. According to scientists Alicia Blum-Ross and Sonia Livingston, **the problem with these types of recommendations is, that they are generally not based on scientific evidence and they are not always compatible with the daily lives of families**.

"Focusing only on limits is hardly a realistic proposition in an age when digital media are fast becoming the infrastructure for work, leisure, learning, relationships and community life."[3]

Many parents feel burdened by these kinds of recommendations. This can lead them to focus solely on counting minutes instead of focusing on their child's activity and the positive aspects of screen use.

Of course, making rules and agreements can be useful, however, such restrictions need to be individually determined and carefully discussed.

In a poster slipped into your brochure, you will find Serge Tisseron's 3-6-9-12 rule that you can build on, as well as additional tips on how you can help your child develop a responsible relationship with digital media, with plenty of fun, excitement and discovery!



Remember: the problem is not so much the media digital media as the way to use them!

[3] LIVINGSTONE, S. et BYRNE, J. « Parenting in the Digital Age. The Challenges of Parental Responsibility in Comparative Perspective ». In: MASCHERONI G et al. Digital Parenting.
The Challenges for Families in the Digital Age, Göteborg: Nordicom, 2018, p. 181



5. SCREEN TIME? YES, BUT WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE!

A. "WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?"

Are you worried that your child is spending too much time in front of screens? The only way to find out for sure is to **talk to your child about it!**

Another option would be to teach your child early on to **keep a written record of their media use, logging the context, the type of activity and how they felt emotionally while doing it.** This could prevent your child from feeling overly controlled or limited, and also encourages self-evaluation. You can make an overview for yourself and your child or adapt the attached chart to your situation. In addition, screen-time apps and smartphone functions that show how long and how often the device is being used can be useful to complete the overview.

Remember: it is not only about quantity, it is also about quality!

WITH MEDIA

	WHAT Chatting, social media, games, homework, etc.	WHY Learning, creativity, communication, boredom, fun, etc.	WITH WHOM Alone, accompanied	WHEN Morning, afternoon, evening, night	WHERE At home, at school, at a friend's house, etc.	MOOD
MONDAY						
TUESDAY						
WEDNESDAY						
THURSDAY						
FRIDAY						
SATURDAY						
SUNDAY						

WITHOUT MEDIA

	WHAT Chatting, social media, games, homework, etc.	WHY Learning, creativity, communication, boredom, fun, etc.	WITH WHOM Alone, accompanied	WHEN Morning, afternoon, evening, night	WHERE At home, at school, at a friend's house, etc.	MOOD
MONDAY						
TUESDAY						
WEDNESDAY						
THURSDAY						
FRIDAY						
SATURDAY						
SUNDAY						



QUESTIONNAIRE

ON THESE DAYS, I FELT  **OR**  **:**

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

WHAT DID I DO ON THESE DAYS?

ON THESE DAYS, I FELT  **OR**  **:**

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

WHAT DID I DO ON THESE DAYS?

I SPEND A LOT OF TIME ALONE:

◯ YES ◯ NO

I TOLD A TRUSTWORTHY PERSON HOW I FEEL:

◯ YES ◯ NO

I DID...

◯ MORE ◯ ABOUT AS MANY ◯ FEWER ◯ NO

...OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

THIS IS WHAT I SPENT MOST OF MY TIME DOING THIS WEEK:

B. "LET'S CONFIGURE THE DEVICE FIRST SO THAT IT'S SECURE."

Protect your devices and your family's personal data by using a different and strong password for each account (consider using a password manager). Ideally, you should create a family e-mail address that your child can use to sign up for new games or websites. Also, remember to update your software regularly. That way, potential predators will not stand a chance!

Familiarize yourself with the different options offered by companies such as Apple[4] and Google[5]: they have developed applications that you can use to protect your device and keep track of how much time you spend on it.

Configure all devices according to the functions available on each one:

- create a user account with limited access
- disable automatic purchases and block pop-up ads
- determine the homepage
- verify which data can be accessed by which applications and deactivate useless functions (*personal information, geolocation data, audio or video recordings, vocal recognition*)

PARENTAL CONTROL

Thanks to filters[6], you can restrict access to certain websites, limit the time of use, and even track what your child is doing on the Internet. These filters can be helpful, but it is also important to understand that they create an Internet experience for your child that does not represent reality. They could become counterproductive as the children get older and start looking for ways to work around them. In addition, there is also the issue of privacy protection, both for your child and for the people they are interacting with. One solution would be to start with these filters and gradually guide your child towards an unfiltered internet access.

This control of the technical aspects should never be seen as a replacement for discussions with your child!

[4] apple.com/de/families [5] families.google.com/familylink [6] for example : bee-secure.lu/fr/beefilter

C. "MUM & DAD DO IT TOO"

When parents are on their own digital devices, they can become distracted at the expense of their children's needs, especially with younger children. Your child will only take those first steps once! Who knows what can happen in that one minute of diverted attention. **Make sure to set aside your device from time to time, turn off your notifications and live in the moment**. Someone wishing to contact you by emergency will call you directly.

The World Health Organization also stresses that, in order to grow up healthy, children need distractions in the form of sedentary and physical activities, as well as sufficient sleep. **Organize fun activities for the whole family and offer a variety of options** (reading, sports, puzzles, cooking, stories, singing, drawing, etc.).

Children learn by imitating their parents. They listen to what you say and watch how you use your devices, for what purpose, and how much time you spend on them. **In your child's eyes, you are the most important example**! Talk to your children about using digital media and make sure that your own behaviour sets a good role model and is reassuring.

Take a serious look at your own digital media use

- How do you represent yourself online and on social media? What information, photos or videos do you share? What information do others share about you?
- How do you talk with and about other people?
  Do you talk the same way at home as you do at work?
  Are you different when you are online?
- Do you ask permission before posting a photo of someone else?
  Do you ask your child's permission as well?
- In general, how and when do you use digital media?



D. "WE SET THE RULES TOGETHER AND THEN WE WILL STICK TO THEM!"

Some parents are afraid that setting up rules will damage the relationship with their child or create tensions in the family. Family discussions can help. **Talk about the needs of all members of the family and decide together how you are going to use digital media in your everyday lives.**

The rules should be realistic and adapted to the family's, situation so that you can actually stick to them. You can also use this opportunity to explain to your child why the rules are sometimes different for adults.

Some ideas for making rules about screen use:

▶ Use screens in a conscious way

No Television in the background, no quick checking of the smartphone when you or your child is focused on something else (e.g. family meals, homework, etc.).

▶ At night, turn on the "do not disturb" function and switch off the WiFi

Only allow your favourite contacts to reach you on your smartphone. This can be especially useful when your child spends the night at someone's house or when a teenager does not come home after a party. The WiFi can be switched off every evening at a set time. Children's devices can be kept outside of their bedroom at night.

▶ Try to avoid screens as much as possible before the age of 3 and set limits with your child

Look for alternatives, such as building blocks, books, and games of skill or patience, and agree on usage times with your child. (the end of an episode, a specific moment in the film, etc.).

▶ Find compromises for video games

Playing time can be limited by agreeing on a set number of games or establishing a specific stopping point (e.g. when a life is lost, a saving point has been reached, or the level has been completed).

▶ Do not use screens as a punishment or reward

Punishment can lead to further conflict, or it can reinforce an existing conflict. By using screen time as a reward, you are likely to increase the child's fascination with it and make it harder to limit.

A media use contract[7] created online can also be a useful tool for establishing rules, as the act of signing something can make them feel more official.

[7] Example: www.childnet.com/resources/family-agreement



THE 4 STEPS (4 NO-SCREEN TIMES)

The method by French psychologist Sabine Duflo is easy to remember:

- No screens in the morning
- No screens during meals
- No screens before bed
- No screens in the child's bedroom

By respecting these "4 no-screen times", you will have more time to talk, play, enjoy family meals, sleep well and exercise!

E. "LET'S THINK BEFORE WE SHARE."

Encourage your child to be cautious when sharing personal information with other people. **Configuring the privacy settings on your devices together** is a good occasion to discuss the potential risks of social networks and other websites. For young children, the rules can be quite simple: never share your name, phone number or a photo without asking Mum or Dad for permission first. Explain to your child that **information and photos published online** can be **shared quickly** and are often **difficult to delete.**[8]

Reflect on your own behaviour on social media as well. **Ask your child for permission before sharing photos of them**. Avoid sharing baby photos online or take them in such a way that the baby cannot be identified. Photos that seem cute and original to you at the time could later become a burden to your child, either because the photo becomes a subject of mockery or simply because your child does not appreciate finding photos of him- or herself on the Internet for the whole world to see. **Encourage your child to do the same and to think before posting something online.**

[8] For more information on the topic of sexting: www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/sexting

Moreover, works published online are also protected by copyright. This applies to literary works, music, fine arts and cinema. Download them only from legal sites. Publishing copyrighted works is also prohibited (e.g. on Facebook, YouTube, in a sales ad, etc.).

Always check whether a work is protected by copyright before using it. Ignorance will not protect you from sanction.

F. "HOW ABOUT WE WATCH THIS TOGETHER"

Keep in mind, that digital media has a lot to offer![9] Depending on your child's age, find out which online offers they can use independently or with your help. Ideally, you should have a look together before letting your child play on it alone. Listen to your child when they talk about games or other content they like or want to discover. This will help you better assess how long the game should be played for and how to report any abuse.

Here are a few examples:

- **Video chats for talking with friends**
  for example: Skype, WhatsApp, etc.

- **Interactive games for single or multiple players**
  for example: Interland[10], CBeebies[11], education.com, Fiete[12], Island Saver[13]

- **Look at photos together, describe them and create a slide show**
  This is a good opportunity to talk about photo sharing and online privacy.

- **Create short videos about daily life**
  for example: go shopping, take a walk; With the right applications you can easily create interactive stories, such as an animated drawing with "Puppet Pals"[14]

- **Mobile phone games and age-appropriate websites**
  You can find useful information on this topic on the website of "common sense media" [15],"Family Video Game Database" [16] and "betterinternetforkids" [17] (in different languages).

POINT OF REFERENCE: THE PEGI LABEL

The Pan-European Game Information (PEGI)[18] label is recognized by major game developers like Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo and identifies the necessary aptitude for different age categories, namely ages 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18 years old. This label is present on the game's box, along with the reasons why it has been classified as such (violence, profanity, horror, drugs, sexual content, discrimination, gambling, multi-player games). However, the label says nothing about the difficulty of the game or the skills required to play it. It is also important to remember that children can meet people of all ages in game chats.



[9] Cf. 2. Possibilities of digital media p.6
[10] https://beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com/en_us/interland
[11] https://global.cbeebies.com
[12] https://apps.apple.com/us/app/fiete/id586669403
[13] Available on Steam, PlayStation 4, Microsoft Windows, Nintendo Switch, Xbox One
[14] Available on Google Play and via the App Store
[15] www.commonsensemedia.org
[16] www.taminggaming.com
[17] www.betterinternetforkids.eu/positive-content
[18] www.pegi.info

G. "LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!"

Teach your child to be critical about the information that they find on the Internet: **What is it about exactly? Can the source be trusted? How do other sources treat this subject?** Show your child websites, which contain reliable information.

Recognizing 'native advertising' is not easy either. These do not look like advertising: they are adapted to each site so that the visitor does not notice that it is an advertisement.

Pay attention to the fine print, such as "sponsored" and "paid partnership", and look for brand logos. Point these things out to your child.



H. "LET'S TALK ABOUT IT, I'M HERE FOR YOU."

No matter how careful you are, it is possible, that your child may come across content that they don't understand or that they find upsetting.

Depending on your child's age, explain that certain content is only meant for adults and talk with your child about what they should do if they encounter upsetting material online (e.g. turn off the screen and come find you). Discuss what they should do if they encounter hateful comments online (block, ignore, search for and share positive alternative stories, flag) and explain that pornography should not be compared with real, intimate relationships.

Explain the potential risks associated with meeting online acquaintances in the real world and that this should not happen without your knowledge. Find common ground before your child meets "friends" in real life: Discuss the possibilities of such a meeting with your teen and consider ways to make it safer (for example, by meeting the person in a public place or with a trusted person nearby).

Make sure your child knows that they can trust you, that you will support them without judgement, even in extreme cases.



I. "DID YOU KNOW?"

On **the BEE SECURE website** you can find **weekly updates**[19] on news and events in the field of digital media. To stay in the loop, consider making **bee-secure.lu** your homepage. BEE SECURE also regularly organizes **parent evenings**[20] where you can share experiences with other parents and experts.

These evenings will definitely help you talk with your child about their relationship with digital media.

J. "DIGITAL MEDIA IS COOL!"

As you have seen in this guide, digital media allows young people to **discover and develop in all kinds of positive ways**[21] : it offers space for creativity, for sharing experiences and knowledge with others, for working in groups, etc. Perhaps young people simply need adults to set a good example?



[19] www.bee-secure.lu/news
[20] Information via the contact form: www.bee-secure.lu/contact
[21] For inspiration: www.bee-creative.lu , www.codeclub.lu

6. POINTS OF CONTACT

BEE SECURE Helpline

Contact the **BEE SECURE Helpline** at **8002 1234**. This service offers children, teens, parents, teachers and educators advice and assistance on matters related to all types of media. Telephone counselling is free and anonymous.



BEE SECURE Stopline

Contribute to the fight against illegal content online: if you come across anything online that you think might be illegal, you can flag it anonymously at **https://stopline.bee-secure.lu**. By illegal content, we mean: representations of sexual abuse of minors, racist, revisionist and/or discriminatory content, and terrorist content.



Kanner-Jugendtelefon (KJT)

The KJT provides anonymous advice and information for children and young people online (www.kjt.lu) or via their toll-free phone number (116 111). For support in English contact KJT Youth online at www.kjt.lu



KJT-Elterentelefon

Parents may also have questions or be facing problems regarding their child's welfare or education. Feel free to contact the parent hotline, known as the Elterentelefon, at **26 64 05 55**. All calls are confidential and anonymous. For support in English contact KJT Parents online at www.kjt.lu

Anonym Gléckspiller a.s.b.l.

The "**game over**" counselling centre by Anonym Gléckspiller is available to answer your questions about the healthy use of digital screen media. In addition to providing education and information for parents and young people, the service also offers diagnoses in cases of suspected pathological use, educational and family counselling on media issues, and psychotherapeutic support.

7. INFORMATION AND SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

BEE SECURE publications
www.bee-secure.lu/publications

Learn how to protect yourself with a secure password
www.bee-secure.lu/passwort

Tools to help against cyberbullying
On the BEE SECURE website, you will find all kinds of information about cyberbullying to help your child, whether they are the victim or witness of this kind of aggression.
www.bee-secure.lu/cybermobbing-guide

Fun, educational websites for children
- **www.bee.lu**
- **www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/positive-content**

More information on digital media education online
- Webwise Parents Hub
  www.webwise.ie/parents

- Childnet International
  www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers

- Internetmatters.org
  www.internetmatters.org

- Media Smarts
  https://mediasmarts.ca

- Parental controls: advice for parents, researchers and industry
  http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/65388

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Y	M	V	U	O	B	D	I	S	C	U	S	S	B	C
R	M	R	Q	L	A	N	P	D	Q	Z	G	P	K	U
P	U	Q	U	L	R	O	P	L	O	P	M	R	L	U
V	N	U	R	A	S	E	F	L	A	C	A	R	I	N
D	I	E	A	B	U	O	K	U	L	Y	N	E	S	I
A	C	S	E	O	P	O	J	J	L	U	A	F	T	C
I	A	T	D	R	E	D	N	N	E	Y	G	L	E	A
D	T	I	U	A	R	T	R	N	A	C	E	E	N	R
E	E	O	C	T	V	V	Q	E	R	F	O	C	W	R
H	U	N	A	E	I	R	R	D	N	R	Q	T	X	H
D	E	E	T	A	S	O	C	A	D	R	E	R	F	Y
X	X	L	E	I	E	C	U	T	E	R	N	K	W	J
S	U	F	P	C	C	O	M	P	F	R	A	M	E	M

- MANAGE
- SUPERVISE
- LISTEN
- EDUCATE
- QUESTION
- DISCUSS
- LEARN
- COMMUNICATE
- PLAY
- HELP
- REFLECT
- FRAME
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