

# Digital Life 101

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## Directions

Think about your life with media. First consider the questions below. Use your responses to help you finish the statement, "My media life is like a ..." This statement is a simile, a literary device for comparing two unlike things. For instance, someone who does not use much media might say that her media life is like a desert, because there is little life there. Someone might say that his media life is like a track meet, because he is exhausted at the end of the day. Finally, make a picture or drawing of the simile you created. The drawing can include text.

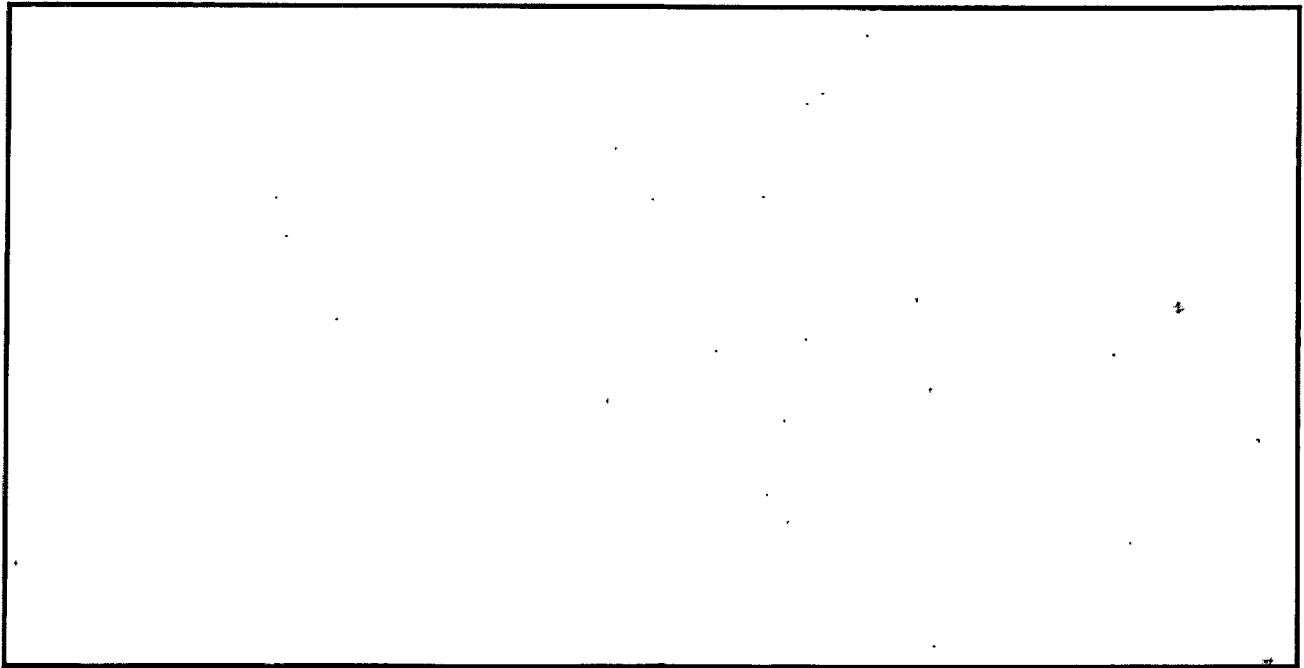
### Questions to consider:

1. Are digital media a small, medium, or big part of your life?
2. What kind of impact do digital media have on you (a little, some, a lot)?
3. What are your favorite and least-favorite things to do with digital media?
4. Do you connect with others or create things with digital media?

Finish this statement: My media life is like a \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

### Illustrate your simile here:



# Customizable Device Contract

## Things to keep in mind...

Before creating a family contract about your kid's personal or school-issued device, talk about how the device will be used at home. Use the suggested guidelines below to help make sure that you and your kid are on the same page. Then use the customizable form to outline your agreed-upon expectations.

## Where, When, & How Long?

- **Decide where you're comfortable having your kid use the device.** Can they only use it in family spaces, like a family room or kitchen? Can they bring it into their bedroom or the bathroom? Can they use it at the dinner table?
- **Consider the difference between using a device for homework and using it for entertainment.** Your kid's school may have specific policies for what a device is to be used for and by whom (e.g., no siblings!).
- **Talk about what it means to "balance" time spent with technology, media, and other activities.** What are some steps your family can take to balance screen time with face-to-face time? Do you want to make the dinner table a device-free zone, in which no family member (not even the adults) may use a cell phone, tablet, or computer? Do you want to set a curfew for when devices need to be shut off?

## Checking In

- **Explain that as the parent or caregiver, part of your job is to guide them.** Identify ways to maintain open, honest communication with your kids about their device.
- **Discuss how you'll monitor the device.** Do you want to check up on your kid's activity? If so, how? Will you ask your kid to give you access to emails, texts, and IMs? Will you review his or her search history (which can be deleted) from time to time?
- **Talk with your kid about the kinds of apps they'll be using and accounts they'll have.** Ask them to show you their favorites, as well as the ones they use most. How do they work? What's so cool about them? How do these tools support their learning?

## Privacy Settings

- **Practice creating a strong password together.** Use at least eight characters (mixing letters, numbers, and symbols) and avoid including any private information such as names, addresses, birth dates, etc. Remember to have your kid write down usernames and passwords and keep the information stored in a safe place.
- **Discuss the importance of not sharing passwords with others,** and decide whether parents should be an exception to the rule. One idea is to have kids create their own passwords but then keep them accessible to parents in a sealed envelope for emergencies.
- **Review privacy policies and privacy settings together.** Make sure your kids understand what private and personal information companies may or may not be collecting. Decide how public or private an audience you all are comfortable with when it comes to sharing and posting.

## Care & Maintenance

- **Discuss what you consider to be responsible care and maintenance of what are often expensive tools.** Where will the device be stored and charged at home? Why is it important to treat the device gently and not shove it into a backpack?
- **Outline the responsibility factor.** Discuss what will happen and who's responsible if the device gets stolen, lost, or broken — even if by accident.

## Communicating Responsibly Online

- **Talk about the difference between using the device to communicate with classmates for school-related work and using it for hanging out** or goofing off with friends. What are the school's guidelines for appropriate use? How will you enforce similar expectations at home?
- **Discuss your family rules for social networking and messaging** — with people they know, sort of know, or don't know at all. What does it mean to be respectful to and respected by others? What does that look like? Use this as a springboard for a discussion about cyberbullying, privacy, and safety.

# Family Media Agreement: 6-8

## I will ...

### stay safe.

- I will not create accounts or give out any private information – such as my full name, date of birth, address, phone number, or photos – without my family's permission.
- I will not share my passwords with anyone other than my family. I will ask my family to help me with privacy settings if I want to set up devices, accounts, or profiles.
- If anyone makes me feel pressured or uncomfortable, or acts inappropriately toward me online, I'll stop talking to that person and will tell a friend or family member I trust about it.
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### think first.

- I will not bully, humiliate, or upset anyone online or with my phone – whether through sharing photos, videos, or screenshots, spreading rumors or gossip, or setting up fake profiles – and I will stand up to those who do.
- I know that whatever I share online or with my cell phone can spread fast and far. I will not post anything online that could harm my reputation.
- Whenever I use, reference, or share someone else's creative work online, I will give proper credit to the author or artist.
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### stay balanced.

- I know that not everything I read, hear, or see online is true. I will consider whether a source or author is credible.
- I will help my family set media time limits that make sense, and then I will follow them.
- I will be mindful of how much time I spend in front of screens, and I will continue to enjoy the other activities – and people – in my life.
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## In exchange, my family agrees to ...

- recognize that media is a big part of my life, even if they don't always understand why.
- talk with me about what worries them and why, before saying "no."
- talk to me about my interests and embrace my world, including helping me find media that's appropriate and fun.

_____ signed by me	_____ signed by my parent or caregiver
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# Our Contract

This contract outlines my family's expectations for how I use my device at home. We agreed upon the following:

## Where, When, & How Long

We talked about what it means to use the device appropriately and respectfully at home. We agree to:

## Checking In

We talked about how we, as a family, will stay involved in how the device is used and what it's used for. We agree to:

## Privacy Settings

We talked about what kinds of accounts I'll have and how I can best protect my private information. We agree to:

## Care & Maintenance

We talked what it means to take good care of my device at home, and what might happen if it's broken, stolen, or lost. We agree to:

## Communicating Responsibly Online

We talked about the different ways I might communicate with other people using my device, and what safe, responsible, and respectful communication looks like. We agree to:

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signed by me

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signed by my parent or caregiver

**Are you a smartphone junkie? Rate each item on a scale of 1 ("completely disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree") and tally up your total score to find out. Be honest!**

1. I would feel uncomfortable without constant access to information through my smartphone.
2. I would be annoyed if I could not look information up on my smartphone when I wanted to do so.
3. Being unable to get the news (e.g., happenings, weather, etc.) on my smartphone would make me nervous.
4. I would be annoyed if I could not use my smartphone and/or its capabilities when I wanted to do so.
5. Running out of battery in my smartphone would scare me.
6. If I were to run out of credits or hit my monthly data limit, I would panic.
7. If I did not have a data signal or could not connect to Wi-Fi, then I would constantly check to see if I had a signal or could find a Wi-Fi network.
8. If I could not use my smartphone, I would be afraid of getting stranded somewhere.
9. If I could not check my smartphone for a while, I would feel a desire to check it.
10. If I did not have my smartphone with me ...  
I would feel anxious because I could not instantly communicate with my family and/or friends.
11. I would be worried because my family and/or friends could not reach me.
12. I would feel nervous because I would not be able to receive text messages and calls.
13. I would be anxious because I could not keep in touch with my family and/or friends.

14. I would be nervous because I could not know if someone had tried to get a hold of me.

15. I would feel anxious because my constant connection to my family and friends would be broken.

16. I would be nervous because I would be disconnected from my online identity.

17. I would be uncomfortable because I could not stay up-to-date with social media and online networks.

18. I would feel awkward because I could not check my notifications for updates from my connections and online networks.

19. I would feel anxious because I could not check my email messages.

20. I would feel weird because I would not know what to do.

### **How You Score:**

**20:** *Not at all nomophobic.* You have a very healthy relationship with your device and have no problem being separated from it.

**21-60:** *Mild nomophobia.* You get a little antsy when you forget your phone at home for a day or get stuck somewhere without WiFi, but the anxiety isn't too overwhelming.

**61-100:** *Moderate nomophobia.* You're pretty attached to your device. You often check for updates while you're walking down the street or talking to a friend, and you often feel anxious when you're disconnected. Time for a digital detox?

**101-120:** *Severe nomophobia.* You can barely go for 60 seconds without checking your phone. It's the first thing you check in the morning and the last at night, and dominates most of your activities in-between. It might be time for a serious intervention.

Carolyn Gregoire, *This Scientific Test Will Tell You How Addicted You Are To Your Smartphone*, 5/18/2015 Huff Post

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