

# Sm@rt e-Team

Teachers



Department of Health  
The Government of the  
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

## *Smart e-Team (Teachers)*

The use of Internet and electronic screen products have become an integral part of daily living. Increasing numbers of education professionals are using online communication tools both personally and professionally. The boundary between teacher and student may become blurred. Teachers should be better informed about the risks of such tools and take steps to uphold their own professional reputation.

Although it is full of fun and excitement in the adventure of the digital world, there are potential risks which may affect our physical & psychosocial health. Educators play an important role in equipping students with the skills to properly use the Internet and electronic screen products.

The following are suggestions for teachers aiming at helping students to use Internet and electronic screen products safely and healthily. These include the “General Principles” (SAFE ACTS), “Frequently Asked Questions” as well as 10 “Health Tips” which are produced by making references to the expert opinions and guidelines by relevant local and overseas institutions.



## *General Principles (SAFE ACTS):*

### *1. Show*

Teachers act as role models to students, demonstrating appropriate cyber-conduct by showing them the right attitude in using Internet and electronic screen products, using appropriate online content and materials in classroom, maintaining online reputation, and establishing professional boundaries when using online tools.

### *2. Aware*

In order to provide proper guidance to our students, teachers should be aware of the functions of the technology, its potential risks and possible adverse consequences. Teachers are also advised to keep updated with the laws which apply to Internet-related crimes and educate students about these legislations.

### *3. Facilitate*

Teachers play an important role in facilitating students to use Internet and electronic screen products in a positive, appropriate and respectful manner. Encourage your students to develop balanced healthy life styles by exploring different interests and hobbies. Develop your students' potentials by showing appreciation of not only their academic performance but also their non-academic achievements.

### *4. Empower*

Like many other activities, using Internet and electronic screen products has lots of benefits but not without risks. Empowering students from young age through basic life skills training is essential. We should equip students with the necessary skills to enhance their time management and handling of negative emotions, to polish their social and communication skills, to increase their self-control and resilience and to improve their self-esteem.

### 5. *Agree*

Teachers are advised to maintain a professional boundary in using e-communication with students. Discuss and agree with your students and their parents the rules and boundaries in using Internet and electronic screen products.

### 6. *Communicate*

Teachers are advised to adopt an open, caring and non-judgmental attitude when communicating with students regarding the use of Internet and electronic screen products. Show your care and support by active listening. Try to understand students' concerns such as their favorite websites. Discuss with them the risks of improper usage of Internet and electronic screen products.

### 7. *Trust*

Teachers may show your trust and respect to the young through open communication. Try to understand your students' concerns. Reciprocal communication and mutual understanding are the key. With a trusting relationship, it would be easier for students to seek help and guidance should they have any queries or problems.

### 8. *Seek*

Be aware of school policies and community resources, which will reinforce the support given to students on issues such as cyber-bullying and excessive use of the Internet. Seeking help from experts and professionals is encouraged if your students are having problems with the use of the Internet and electronic screen products.

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### *A. Teach the importance of cyber-safety*

#### **Question 1**

**What e-safety issues should my students and I be aware of?**

#### **Answer**

1. Inappropriate content is available to children online. Some online materials may contain violent or sexually-explicit content, dirty languages or other inappropriate behaviours which are not suitable for children and young people.
2. By giving out personal information when chatting or posting online, students may be at risk of making their personal information public. These information may be replicated or recorded permanently in the Internet which may cause serious consequences.
3. Students may become victims of online predators if they disclose too much personal information or post nude pictures.
4. By receiving, sending or forwarding threatening and unwanted messages, students may be involved in cyber-bullying.
5. There is a risk of excessive use of the Internet and gaming which may affect other important aspects of their lives, including academic performance, daily activities, interpersonal communications.



## Question 2

**What specific advice should I give my students regarding Internet safety?**

### Answer

1. Be aware of the consequences of their digital footprint and think before sharing photos or videos online. Students should be reminded that information put online is unlikely to be cleared from Internet record.
2. Change passwords regularly. Always keep personal information private such as address, telephone number, etc. Adjust the privacy settings on the social networking sites so that only their approved friends can view their profile and instant message them.
3. Students should be aware that meeting someone they have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Never chat, video chat or arrange face-to-face meeting with anyone they know online but do not know in the real world.
4. Teach your students the importance of filtering software and high security settings which can block unwanted messages.
5. Download or install software from official and reliable sources so as to protect their computers from hackers.
6. Information on the Internet may not be true. Always check information with other official websites, books or experts.
7. Enrich your students' knowledge on laws or regulations related to Internet behavior and the consequences of such offences.
8. To share with students the news about cyber-crime to raise their alertness.



## *B. Help to prevent your students from excessive use of the Internet*

### **Question 3**

**How can I pick up students who may be using Internet excessively?**

#### **Answer**

Communicate with your students' parents and observe your students' behaviours. There are signs to look for if you suspect your student may be using the Internet excessively:

1. Often uses more time online than planned and sacrifices needed hours of sleep to spend time online, resulting in excessive fatigue.
2. Academic problem such as sudden decline in grades, failure to hand in homework, being late for school and truancy.
3. Becomes agitated or angry when online time is interrupted. Preoccupied with online activities, feeling lost and anxious when offline.
4. Withdrawal from friends and family. Prefer to spend time online rather than with friends or family. Conflicts with family when restricted from online access.
5. Withdrawal from their usual extra-curricular activities, loss of interest in activities or hobbies.



## Question 4

**How can I work together with parents in preventing my students from excessive use of the Internet?**

### Answer

1. Spend time and talk with your students about their favourite websites, online activities, etc., actively listen and try to understand the reasons behind their use of the Internet.
2. Understand your students' difficulties and underlying problems such as lack of achievement motivation, low self-esteem, learning problem, over reliance on gaming for a sense of satisfaction and achievement. Students may be more willing to discuss their problems and seek help from you if they feel being understood.
3. Help your students understand the risks and benefits of using the Internet. Help them develop proper attitude and a balanced and healthy life style. Teach them time management skills and set time limit on Internet use. Develop your students' interests and strengths. Expand their exposure and social network by participating in a wide variety of activities.
4. Maintain close and regular communication with parents. Early recognition of signs and symptoms of excessive use of the Internet is important. Refer to professionals for counseling and follow-up.



## *C. Maintain professional boundaries when using online tools*

### **Question 5**

**What should I be aware of when I use email or smartphone to contact students or parents?**

### **Answer**

1. Find out about the school policy and the etiquette for contacting students inside and outside the classroom using email and smartphone.
2. You can contact students and parents through different channels including telephone and email. If your students do need to contact you with regard to assignments or examinations, your school email address is to be preferred. You may consider setting up a separate account instead of using personal email accounts to contact students or parents.
3. If you are going to “chat” with your students online, ensure you set up “office hour” so that you are free to end the conversation when the time is up. You may also want to set time limits on how long you speak with each student. Make sure that your students and their parents are aware of these boundaries and limits.
4. Office telephone is preferred, keep personal phone numbers private when using smartphones to contact students or parents.

## Question 6

What should I do if a student wants to “friend” me on my social networking account?

### Answer

1. You can use different channels to communicate with your students so as to understand their feelings and behaviours. You are advised to use official channels of communication, e.g. office email address or set up a separate profile to be used only for school.
2. Avoid using personal email account to contact students. Establish professional boundaries and avoid “friending” students and parents or giving them access to personal blogs and image-sharing sites. Avoid sharing your students’ or your own personal information.



## *D. Be aware of cyberbullying*

### **Question 7**

**What should I emphasize to my students about cyber-bullying?**

#### **Answer**

1. Overseas and local studies found that cyber-bullying victimization is associated with serious psychosocial, affective and academic problems such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, school refusal, social withdrawal and even suicidal ideation.
2. Cyber-bullying, like other form of bullying, is never acceptable. Something sent as a joke may be deeply upsetting or offensive to others. The sender may send it as a joke without thinking or being aware of the potential seriousness of the consequence.
3. Cyber-bullying material can be distributed worldwide rapidly. Sending or forwarding nasty messages could be assisting a bully, and even be accused of cyber-bullying.

### **Question 8**

**What can I do to prevent cyber-bullying?**

#### **Answer**

1. Emphasize the school's anti-bullying policy. Educate students about cyber-bullying and help them understand how to prevent and respond to incidents of cyber-bullying. Build a safe environment and establish a school culture of acceptance and respect.
2. Talk to your students about privacy and respect. Tell your students not to quote or forward others' personal messages without permission.
3. Remind your students not to incite cyber-bullying. Encourage them to stop the incidents under safe circumstances and report to teachers.
4. Encourage proper netiquette for communicating online, including guidelines for acceptable language and content. Respect people with different opinions and reinforce positive social interactions.
5. Encourage your students to be a responsible digital citizen. Students need to have a better understanding of family, school, and legal limits of online speech.

## Question 9

**How do I know when my student is being cyberbullied?**

### Answer

Communicate with parents and observe your students' behaviours. Students who are cyberbullied may exhibit the following signs:

1. Showing signs of significant emotional distress after using the Internet.
2. Becoming more anxious when emails or texts arrive.
3. Declining grades and loss of interest in schoolwork.
4. Being bullied at school.
5. Avoidance of social situations or not wanting to go to school.

## Question 10

**What should I do if a student makes a disclosure?**

### Answer

1. Familiarize with the school policy which addresses the issue of cyber-bullying.
2. Stay calm and acknowledge your student's courage and assertiveness to seek help. Show your support and do not blame the student.
3. Identify and correct myths such as "the bullies have the right to demean those who are inferior" or "it is useless to seek help".
4. Save the evidence. Learn how to keep records of offending messages, pictures or online conversation.
5. Never retaliate or reply to bullying messages so as to avoid aggravating the problem.
6. Block the bully. Filtering software and security setting adjustment may help. Report to the moderator of the site or service provider.
7. If the cyber-bullying is serious or if the messages include threats, report to the police.

## HEALTH TIPS

The following 10 health tips aim to serve as reference to encourage healthy use of the technology through minimizing the potential harmful health effects that may be relating to its use.

### 1 Be physically active, go outdoor

- 1.1 Consecutive use for more than one hour of Internet and other electronic screen products including smartphones, tablet personal computers, video games, or television is discouraged.
- 1.2 Physical activities, including outdoor activities, are encouraged:
  - 1.2.1 Pre-schoolers: Accumulate at least three hours physical activities daily.
    - 1.2.1.1 Under 2 years old:

Give more opportunities for motor activities by allowing toddlers to run and walk instead of being carried or riding in a baby stroller.
    - 1.2.1.2 2 to 6 years old:

Teachers should encourage parents and their children to have play (preferably outdoor), stretching, aerobic, muscle strengthening and group activities daily. At home, light intensity activities (e.g. playing with toys, dressing up, packing school bags, etc.) on top of more vigorous ones (e.g. brisk walking, riding tricycle, playing hide-and-seek, etc.) are the range of activities good for young children's health and growth.
  - 1.2.2 Primary and secondary school students (6 to 18 years old): Accumulate at least one hour of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
    - 1.2.2.1 Moderate-intensity physical activity e.g. swimming, cycling or playing volley ball.
    - 1.2.2.2 Vigorous-intensity physical activity e.g. playing basketball, football or rope skipping.

## **2 Engage in interactive activities in real life**

- 2.1 Play time and talking between children and parents, especially for younger children, is encouraged for emotional bonding and social development.
- 2.2 In school, group activities are encouraged for development of social and communication skills as well as emotional management.
- 2.3 Parents and teachers are encouraged to appreciate and acknowledge the importance of physical activities and non-academic achievements in the holistic development of children and adolescents.

## **3 Limit screen time and choose screen activities wisely**

- 3.1 The following suggestions on screen time for children and adolescents are recommended.

### 3.1.1 Pre-schoolers:

#### 3.1.1.1 Under 2 years old:

Avoid screen time as far as possible. Parents should spend as much quality time with children as possible to replace screen time in order to promote the cognitive, physical, social and emotional development of children. In any case, children should not be left alone with the electronic screen products.

#### 3.1.1.2 2 to 6 years old:

If electronic screen products have to be used, screen time should be limited to no more than two hours a day and under the guidance and supervision by parents or teachers.

### 3.1.2 Primary school students:

#### 3.1.2.1 6 to 12 years old:

Limit recreational screen time to no more than two hours a day. Set rules to help children build up time management skills.

### 3.1.3 Secondary school students:

#### 3.1.3.1 12 to 18 years old:

Adolescents should be trained to develop good time management skill and self-discipline to work independently and prepare themselves to be responsible adults. Regular breaks should be adopted if prolonged screen time e.g. for academic purpose, is unavoidable.

#### 4 Blink, break and rest

- 4.1 Rest for 20-30 seconds after every 20-30 minutes when using electronic screen products.
- 4.2 Change position, blink eyes and do muscle relaxation exercise.



Keep back and neck straight with elbow supported



Keep palm up and stretch wrist downward



Stretch fingers backward



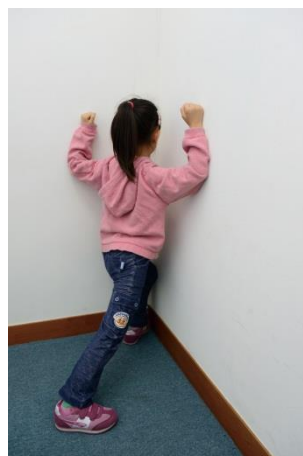
Circle shoulder blade backward



Tuck chin in



Stretch neck sideways



Stretch chest wall

Source: Hong Kong Physiotherapy Association

## 5 Adopt proper setting

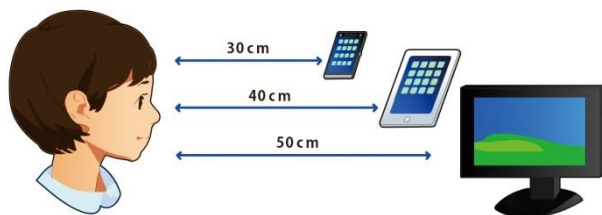
### 5.1 Adjust brightness, font size and workstation.



- A. Eyes should be slightly above the top of the screen and no less than 50 cm from the screen.
- B. Sit upright and close to the desk.
- C. Forearms should be approximately horizontal and supported by the desk. A space in front of the keyboard to allow hands and wrists to rest when not typing.
- D. Keep wrists straight when keying.
- E. Position a mouse within easy reach so it can be used with a straight wrist.
- F. Legs should have room to move under the desk.
- G. Choosing a chair with round edge or curved cushion seat can avoid excess pressure from the edge of seat on the backs of legs and knees. A footrest may be helpful especially for children.

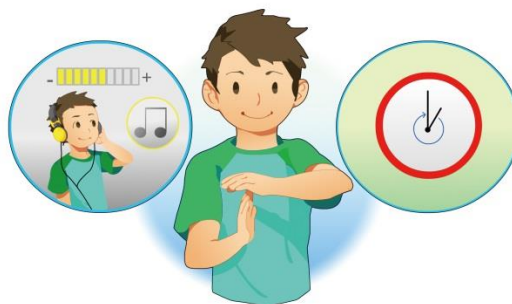


5.2 Keep reading distance no less than 50cm for a computer, 40cm for a tablet personal computer or 30cm for a smartphone.



## 6 Protect hearing, prevent accident and pay attention to hygiene

6.1 Adopt the 60 – 60 Rule: Listen at no more than 60% of the mobile device's maximum volume for less than cumulative 60 minutes a day. Prolonged use of earphones should be avoided to prevent accumulative noise induced damage.



6.1.1 Sound with sudden rise and fall of noise level e.g. shooting, hammer, and firecracker in video games (impulse sound) and sound of noise level change drastically over time, e.g. road traffic noise, rock music (fluctuating sound) are more damaging than continuous noise with the same sound level. Adjust the output to a lower volume setting for music / game/ film that include impulse and fluctuating sound.

6.1.2 Use the built-in “smart volume” feature which help to regulate the volume and cap the possible maximum output in the products, if available.

6.2 Avoid using mobile electronic screen products while doing other tasks requiring attention e.g. crossing the roads etc.

6.3 Pay attention to personal hygiene, clean the surface of the screen regularly and avoid sharing the electronic screen products with others.

## **7 Ensure adequate sleep time and appropriate environment**

- 7.1 Adequate sleep time is essential for health. Total amount of sleep in a day is different for different age groups:
  - 7.1.1 Toddlers 1 to 3 years old: 12 to 13 hours
  - 7.1.2 3 to 5 years old: 11 to 13 hours
  - 7.1.3 5 to 12 years old: 9 to 11 hours
  - 7.1.4 12 to 18 years old: 8.5 to 9.5 hours
- 7.2 Encourage a quiet, dim and comfortable sleeping place. Turn off the computer and keep other electronic screen products out of reach during sleep.

## **8 Be aware of cyber-safety**

- 8.1 Once starting to use the Internet, students should be taught to protect their privacy and avoid exposing too much personal information.
- 8.2 Students should be shown and learn how to set password and not to share with others, except parents, if it is found necessary.
- 8.3 Students should not meet a “friend” only known online.
- 8.4 Students should not respond to messages or photos that make them feel uncomfortable or scared, and they should report the incidents to parents or teachers and seek their help.

## **9 Behave oneself when using Internet and social networking sites**

- 9.1 Students should be taught to avoid gossiping, harassing or flaming others with mean or scornful messages that would harm other’s reputation or relationship with friends or family. They have to be respectful and polite online and avoid sending mean messages or making someone look bad, which may remain in the Internet for a very long time with damages out of imaginations.

**10 Restrict access to inappropriate content**

- 10.1 Remind parents to be aware of the content, websites and activities that their children engage, as well as choose age-appropriate video games for their children. They have to frequently monitor them.
- 10.2 If teachers need to conduct an online search with students in class, do a “dry run” and check the search results are appropriate beforehand.

*Hotlines for Healthy Use of Internet*

Name of Organization	Telephone
Hong Kong Family Welfare Society & Education Bureau – Counselling Hotline on Healthy Use of Internet	2 9 2 2 9 2 2 2 Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 9:30pm *WhatsApp : 5 5 9 2 7 4 7 4 Monday to Saturday 9:30am to 9:30pm
Hong Kong Christian Service – Online New Page – Online Addiction Counselling Centre	2 5 6 1 0 3 6 3 Monday to Friday 10am to 1pm & 2pm to 6pm
Tung Wah Group of Hospitals “Say No to Internet Addiction” Project	2 8 2 7 1 0 0 0 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am to 7pm & Tuesday and Friday 10am to 10pm
The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups – Youthline	2 7 7 7 8 8 9 9 Monday to Saturday 2pm to 2am *WhatsApp : 6 2 7 7 8 8 9 9 Monday to Friday 7pm -10pm

The above list is not exhaustive.

**S**how

**A**ware

**F**acilitate

**E**mpower

**A**gree

**C**ommunicate

**T**rust

**S**eek

For further information on healthy use of Internet and electronic screen products,  
please visit website: [http://www.shs.gov.hk/english/internet/health\\_effects.html](http://www.shs.gov.hk/english/internet/health_effects.html)

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