



Parents' Ultimate Guide to Smart Devices

KEEPING TECHNOLOGY
EXPERIENCES SAFE AND
MEANINGFUL

The Tech-Savvy Child

- ▶ Our children are digital natives – They are growing up in a world in which technology plays a part in almost every daily routine.
- ▶ Today, technology is a big part of all the new things children are exploring. Grade schoolers are developing the skills to use a keyboard, talk to digital assistants, play online games, and send texts and emails.



What Are the Facts?

- ▶ Technology is everywhere, and it's always changing.
- ▶ About 95% of teens in the United States have access to a smartphone, and many report that they're online "almost constantly."
- ▶ Pre-teens and teens are physically and cognitively able to do pretty much anything adults can with technology, but it's important to keep in mind that adolescents are more likely than adults to act on impulse and engage in risky behavior—both in the real world and online.
- ▶ Learning media literacy is a top priority for teens navigating social media as they constantly encounter memes, phishing, and trolls.
- ▶ The challenge is developing a positive digital footprint and acting as responsible digital citizens. Teens can be encouraged to use technology to showcase their talents, connect with people they admire, or get involved in important causes.

What Is A Smart Device or Gadget?

- A smart device, as the name suggests, is an electronic gadget that is able to connect, share and interact with its user and other smart devices. Although usually small in size, smart devices typically have the computing power of a few gigabytes.
- The "smart" part refers to any device that communicates with other devices over the internet. But the kinds of smart products designed for home or personal use, such as Apple HomePod, Amazon Echo, Facebook Portal, and Google Home smart speakers, can also adapt to their owners using artificial intelligence technology that "learns" your behavior. These types of products can save time, effort, money, and even human life. They make it easy to play music, get homework help, and make a grocery list. Smart thermostats and lights, for example, can reduce your energy bill. And smart medical devices can alert your doctor when your kid's asthma flares up.




What Are the Different Kinds of Smart Products?

- ▶ **Wearables:** smart watches, smart diapers, and smart sneakers.
- ▶ **Home assistants:** Google Home, the Echo, and Siri.
- ▶ **Smart appliances:** washing machines, refrigerators, coffeemakers.
- ▶ **Connected home products:** electrical outlets, lightbulbs, thermostats.



Are smart speakers OK for kids? Should you buy smart home technology? What are the benefits of smart devices and what are the privacy and security risks?

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- ▶ Though it's easy to be wowed by all the new gadgets and games, it's important for caregivers to think carefully about what role they want technology to play in their family and set limits accordingly.
 - ▶ Rather than demonize the devices, let's look clearly at how children engage with technology and what parents and caregivers can do to make those experiences safe and meaningful.

What are some useful, educational, and fun ways to use a home assistant?

- ▶ Pretty much right out of the box, you can use voice commands to "wake" the devices ("Alexa," "Siri," or "OK, Google") and ask them to do simple things like set a timer, tell a joke, or read a weather forecast. But to do more, you need to dig in to the companion smartphone apps to connect your accounts and enable your preferences.
- ▶ Home assistants can also help kids with reading, writing, and math as well as tasks that involve organization and time management. Scan the companies' website for the "skills" (for the Echo) and "actions" (for Google Home) and give them a try. If you have an Echo, try [these top Alexa skills](#). Learn more about how [kids with special needs](#) can benefit from home assistants. Find out how to be [smarter than Alexa](#).

What kinds of information do smart devices collect?

- ▶ Smart devices collect--at the very least--the data they need to provide you with the service they're offering. For example, your kid's location-aware watch tracks his whereabouts. A smart refrigerator tracks what food you buy.
- ▶ Home assistants track your requests. But they typically collect way more data than they technically need to do their job. The watch still monitors your kid's location even when he's at home eating dinner and may also log which other watches are nearby it or track fitness metrics. The fridge may track every time someone opens the door.
- ▶ It's unclear how much smart speakers pick up of your home chatter, since they sometimes butt in to conversations unexpectedly. Companies claim that they need this data to make their products work better. But they also use it to build consumer profiles to make educated guesses about what you're likely to buy in the future.

What is COPPA, and how does it protect my child?

- ▶ COPPA stands for the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. It's a federal law enforced by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). [COPPA](#) prevents online companies from collecting and using data from kids under 13 without parental consent. This is why nearly all social media companies set their minimum age requirement at 13--because their business models depend on tracking users.
- ▶ Smart devices aren't allowed to knowingly track kids because of the COPPA rule, but when the devices are used in the home, they don't necessarily know the ages of all users. When you set up individual profiles for your kids on smart speakers, it somewhat limits what information the device can collect and store when it knows a kid is using it.

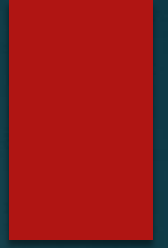
How can I limit the data my smart devices collect?

- ▶ Most connected products have privacy settings that put limits on the use of your data, such as how much the company can collect, what they use it for, how long they can keep it, and how you--as the source of that data--can interact with it. You can usually [find privacy settings](#) in your account profile on the company's website or on an associated app (which is often required to run a smart device).
- ▶ Some privacy features, such as location services, can only be turned on or off. Some you can fine-tune. In the Alexa app that works with Amazon's Echo, for example, you can restrict Amazon from using your voice recordings for certain purposes. They may still collect this information; they just can't use it for purposes you've opted out of.
- ▶ Some products won't work correctly or won't deliver everything they promise if you opt out of certain data collection. If you refuse to upload all your contacts to your home assistant (to protect your friends' privacy), you may not even be able to call one person on the device's call features. Same with photos: If you have a smart photo frame, you may need to grant it access to all your photos for it to display even one.

What's the safest way for my family to use smart devices?

- ▶ Research shows that many families appreciate the benefits of smart devices such as home assistants that can help kids with homework and carry out parenting tasks. And most families really want more insight into how companies collect their data and what they use it for--they just don't know how to do it.
- ▶ It's also true that many families actually like some of the extra benefits, such as grocery store deals and restaurant coupons, that they receive from the collection of their data. How you allow companies to use your data is, ultimately, up to you. Ideally, you are making an informed decision and know what you are agreeing to.

Tips on Using Smart Devices



- ▶ Understand what companies collect.
- ▶ Check privacy settings.
- ▶ Use strong passwords -- and make sure your kids do, too.
- ▶ Protect children with parental consent.
- ▶ Remind your kids to connect safely.
- ▶ Keep your software up to date.
- ▶ Periodically review your data.
- ▶ Model respectful communication with assistants like Alexa and Siri.

How to decide how much screentime is reasonable for your kids.

- ▶ Model Healthy Electronic Use.
- ▶ Educate Yourself on Electronics.
- ▶ Create “Technology-Free Zones”
- ▶ Set Aside Times to Unplug.
- ▶ Use Parental Controls.
- ▶ Explain Why You're Limiting Screen Time.
- ▶ Ask for Your Child's Passwords.



What are the real privacy risks of using smart products?

- ▶ Lack of transparency around data collection and use is one of the biggest risks. Collection and storage are cheap, and companies don't know today what they may want to do tomorrow. This is one reason they offer for collecting so much. So when you opt in to data collection now, you're often agreeing to future unknown uses of your data
- ▶ Another unanswered question about smart home devices is how kids' information is being tracked, collected, and used by companies. Kids interact with these kinds of products all the time, including ones that capture their images such as security cameras, video monitors, and other smart screens. While some products allow parents to set up user profiles for kids using these products, which may offer some extra protections, in general kids are fairly exposed because devices do not differentiate between data collected from grown-ups and data collected from kids.

BRING ON THE SMART DEVICES

Cisco projects that **AMERICANS** will have, on average, **13.6 CONNECTED DEVICES** by 2023, up from 8.4 devices in 2018.

Source: Cisco

 ncta.com |  @NCTAitv

8.4
2018



13.6
2023

