

‘Your phone is not your property’ and other screen time rules a mom gives her 8 kids (Video & Podcast Episode #101)

February 7, 2019 By [Josh Ochs](#) [Leave a Comment](#)

This is an excerpt from podcast episode #101 Josh Ochs had with [Kristin Gambaccini](#), a stay at home mom to 8 kids (18 months to 19 years old).

This article originally was picked up by Today.com and is featured at this link: [‘Your phone is not your property’ and other screen time rules I give my kids](#)

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Ten people sharing space under our one small-ish roof means that privacy is a premium luxury. Privacy is obviously something that is mandatory while using the restroom, taking a shower, or getting dressed. However, aside from that, privacy is a commodity found few and far between around our house. Especially when we are talking about electronics.

It is important to note that my children do not receive a phone of their own until they're in middle school. When they're in middle school, we feel that our kids are mature enough to handle the responsibility that comes along with the device as well as understand and respect our 6 basic rules.

Our 6 basic rules for screen time are:

1. No phones at the dinner table. AT ALL.

No exceptions — that includes parents.

2. No phones during homework time.

Students need to concentrate on the work at hand. School is *always* first.

3. No game time during the school week and only on weekends *after* your chores are completed.

There is entirely too much going on during week nights between school work, after-school activities, sports, and family obligations that there is NO way we can possibly add computer games appropriately into this time frame. In our home, game time is an earned commodity. They are played only after the completion of your responsibilities.

4. There is an alarm set on everyone's phone that rings at 7:30 p.m. during the school week.

The 7:30 alarm means electronic hours are over and your phone must be turned into the phone/tablet basket immediately. No excuses, no exceptions. I firmly believe children need time away from electronics before bed to help turn their smarticles "off" for the night. My husband and I keep the chargers in our room and have a plug-in station for everyone's stuff. Seriously. Go read a book, kids.

5. No phones in the morning until you have fully and completely prepared yourself for your school day.

If they miss the bus because they were preoccupied on their phone and not paying attention to the time, they better start walking and they better be fast. Being tardy to school will not be accepted. (And in case you are curious, yes, my children have had to walk to school. And it was cold and raining. They have not had to walk since. I think they learned their lesson fairly quickly with this one.)

6. Your phone is not your property.

It does not belong to you. It belongs to us, your parents. We paid for the phone and we pay the monthly bill. You must ask permission before downloading any games or apps and I must have every password of yours written down so that I am able to access anything I choose on your phone.

And if I choose to add a GPS Tracker app, a Mobile Monitoring app or a handful of apps I read about in a magazine designed for paranoid parents that make me feel more at ease, so be it.

We take these precautions because we love our kids and we want to protect them

Clearly “privacy” is something that is nonexistent when it comes to electronics in our home. We check our children’s phones nightly. We read their texts and scroll through their apps. We don’t do this to be overbearing or nosy. We don’t do it to be mean or strict. We do it because we love them and it is the only way we feel we can protect them. Does it annoy our children? Absolutely, yes. We don’t care, though.

Here’s the thing: that small, thin rectangle in their hands wields entirely too much power. There are so many unknowns out there in the world wide web. Too many predators to fear and way too much for any parent to fully comprehend or keep tabs on. I mean, I can’t even turn on the news anymore without hearing a horror story regarding a child, the internet and some sicko. Or a child hurting themselves due to online bullying that could have been prevented and dealt with if only the parents, school, or authorities knew.

We may believe our children are “smart enough” or “mature enough” to make the right choices when faced with scary, unimaginable scenarios, but do we really know 100%? And is it worth the risk? I think not.

I’m totally cool with being the “Mean Mom” this time. And maybe, just maybe, some day far, far away, they just might thank me.

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