

Teaching Cyberbalance to K-5th Grade Youth - Leader Guide



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Introduction and Instructions for Youth Leaders

Maintaining a balance of online and offline experiences is key to enjoying a healthy and happy life. We want parents and leaders to have the resources they need to effectively guide youth to use technology in a way that enhances their relationships, improves their health and wellbeing, and makes them more productive.

Teaching Cyber Balance to K-5th Grade Youth is designed to address the technology challenges identified in iKeepSafe’s *Cyberbalance in a Digital Culture* research, and pilot research surveying parents, to help families work towards cyberbalance and digital health.

The materials in this Course are designed to be presented in two youth meetings. The first meeting will introduce and discuss cyberbalance, and the second meeting will provide supporting youth activities. Leaders should plan to invite parents of K-5th grade youth to attend the meetings with their child.

Meeting Preparation for Youth Leaders:

- Watch the *Teaching Cyberbalance to Youth* leader video found at iKeepSafe’s Youtube channel “[Wise Tech Choices: Cyberbalance](#)”
- Review all content in this packet that includes information, step-by-step instructions, and activity plans to incorporate cyberbalance into your group meeting.
- Link to and/or print PDF [Faux Paw Goes to the Games](#), and plan to show to youth on digital device or read aloud.
- Share with and instruct parents:
 - Read *Balance Parent Tips* for background information and practical tips on modeling cyberbalance in their household.
 - Plan to attend the group meetings with youth

Print copies of:

- This packet - *Teaching Cyberbalance to K-5th Grades - Leader Guide* (One per leader)
- *Cyberbalance Parent Tips, K-5th Grades* (One per parent)
- *Public Health: Why Encourage Cyberbalance Handout* (One per parent)
- *Internet Safety Pledge K-5th Grades* (One per youth)
- *Bingo Activity Page* (One per youth)
- *Bingo Icons* (One per youth)

In group meetings, help youth complete the following:

Read, commit to, and sign the *Internet Safety Pledge K-5th Grade*.

1. Read the book “Faux Paw Goes to the Games”.

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2. Complete the *Learning Activities* to demonstrate what they have learned about balancing screen time.
3. Share with their family, group leader, and group, what they have learned.



Cyberbalance Information for Youth Leaders

Background on Cyberbalance

Kids, even young kids, spend more time engaged with media than they do in any activity other than sleeping. As leaders, preparing your youth for life means proactively teaching them how to balance their online and offline activities.

The skills that help them achieve balanced digital lives, such as time-management and self-awareness, can be learned over time and from an early age. Indeed, research regularly indicates that mastering self-control in this way is a positive predictor for future academic and other life successes. Leaders teaching balance help youth avoid the physical, social, and emotional health challenges that are associated with problematic use.

Technology, media, and device use becomes problematic when it interferes with daily life and responsibilities. Though this manifests differently depending on individual situations, personal goals, and age, there are common consequences we can all struggle with. Losing sleep, procrastinating in school, replacing in-person social interaction with screen time, becoming emotionally dependent on social media approval, and loss of attention span could all be consequences of an unbalanced life.

Lack of balance can harm our bodies as well as our minds. Not only can habitual or problematic media use interfere with the physical exercise we need, but spending so much time bending over our mobile devices, computers, and keyboards is leading to widespread chiropractic issues – particularly in the head, neck, shoulders, and back.

How do we manage these challenges?

The solution is not to take technology away, but to shed light on the benefits and drawbacks of digital tools, set appropriate limits, and encourage creative alternatives to, as well as smart use of, digital media.

Encourage youth to self-monitor their activities through journaling and logging to develop self-regulating skills. Ask youth about a specific behavior while they are self-monitoring to highlight the importance of a topic. This will lead the youth to think about what they are doing and modify or specify their actions.

Physical activity is crucial, as youth are continuing to develop their coordination skills, develop stamina, and master their bodies. Social interaction and breaks from screen time are equally important, and can be similarly self-monitored.

Most social media networks, such as Facebook or Instagram, are not for children under 13. There are some social networking sites designed for the kids under 13, and these have built in, required parental consent and protective measures.



Did You Know?

Bending our necks to lean over phones increases the volume of strain on the neck to about 60 pounds, and over time can lead to the development of a ‘dowagers hump’ even in teenagers. Slumping in this way negatively affects mood and self-esteem.

Tips

Leaders can most effectively help youth create and maintain cyberbalance by modeling a healthy online/offline balance. This can understandably be difficult, when adults’ work responsibilities, communications, and entertainment can all rely on digital tools. However, being prepared for life includes having a varied diet of experiences to support overall development and, in particular, social development.

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Leader Guided Discussion Outline

Preparation: Download or link to the book [*Faux Paw Goes to the Games - Balancing Real Life with Screen Time*](#)

TELL: (Faux Paw is pronounced “Fo” Paw. Introduce book) We are going to hear a story about “Cyberbalance.” Have you heard that word before? This fun book is titled Faux Paw Goes to the Games – Balancing Real Life with Screen Time which is about a cat who loves technology.

ASK: What are some of the things you like to do using technology? We will see what Faux Paw likes to do.

READ BOOK- Digital book projected on a screen or monitor works best for larger groups. For a small group, a tablet can be shown.

Discussion Guide:

ASK: What did Faux Paw miss by continuing to play digital games?

ASK: Why would it have been a better choice for Faux Paw to go sight-seeing with Tai Shan in China than go to the practice?

ASK: Would a true friend want you to miss an important job that you have been given?

TELL: Let’s talk about “HEALTHY BODIES & HEALTHY BRAINS” & why “BALANCE with Technology” is needed.

ASK: What are some activities or sports you can do offline that cannot be done online—on a digital device like a tablet or cell phone?

ASK: Why is it healthy for your body to move around and have physical exercise more than only sitting?

ASK: Why is it not a wise choice to lose sleep and stay up late to play an online game?

ASK: Why would it be a good idea for your parents to set a time limit on the amount of “screen time” you can have?

TELL: Let’s see how many of you want a healthy body & healthy brain.

TELL DIRECTIONS: Put your right hand on your upper left arm muscle—like this. (Demonstrate this ACTION- hand on upper arm muscle.)

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TELL: Now, raise your left arm up (while still holding on to your muscle) ...if you think that sleep, nutritious food & a variety of exercise & activities build a **HEALTHY BODY**.

TELL DIRECTIONS: Put your right hand on top of your head—which is where your brain is—like this. (Demonstrate this **ACTION**- hand on top of **HEAD**.)

TELL: Now, raise your left arm up (while you still have your right hand on top of your head) ... if you agree that sleep, nutritious food & a variety of activities help to build a **HEALTHY, clear-thinking BRAIN**.

TELL: Yes, we **ALL** want to have a healthy body & healthy brain. That's why **BALANCE** is needed.

TELL: Let's ask your parents to give answers to 1 question.

ASK: Why would you set a time limit on how long your youth could spend with “screen time?” (Get several responses: Because I want them to be healthy. Because I care about them growing up to be strong. Because I love them and my job is to guide him.)

GIVE out hard copy of Parent Tips- **TELL Parents:** Here is a list of tips on how to be helpful to your youth. There is link written at the bottom where you can find more information.



Learning Activities Guide for Youth Leaders

Use these recommended games to teach youth about **Balance with Technology**. Other terms for this are cyberbalance, or digital balance. The suggested activities help highlight different ways of communicating and balancing offline and online activities.

Balance BINGO: Friendship & Communication

You will need:

Pencils

Tape or glue

Lots of BINGO markers (you can use pennies)

1 printed out, blank BINGO Activity Page per youth

1 printed out icon sheet per youth

Small slips of paper

Bowl (for slips of paper)

Tell the youth: Please think of ways of communicating that have been used throughout history. This could be anything! (Examples – if they need some hints: rock carvings, mail, town crier, books, pony express, sign language, newspapers, television, telephone, radio, morse code, the Internet, and telegrams.)

Paper Slips for Bowl: As you brainstorm, write down each method of communication on a small slip of paper and put it in the bowl. Icons of these different methods are printed on small squares which will go on each BINGO card. (Everyone's card will look different.)

Youth prepare their Bingo card: Give each youth squares to cut out. Have them tape or glue the little cut out icon squares in each bingo box square, until the card is full.

Play: Shake the bowl of paper slips to shuffle. Pick out one at a time, reading out the communication method to the group. If that method is on their board, they mark the spot with a BINGO marker. The first one to get 5 markers in a row (diagonal or horizontal) yells out "BINGO!" and wins the game.

Discuss: What are some advantages (plus), disadvantages (minus) and things that are interesting for each way of communicating? Ask the group which way of communicating is their favorite to use.



Charades: Balancing Online & Offline Time

You won't need any materials for this activity.

ASK: What are some things you do for fun, on the computer and the Internet, and outside?

Think of one thing you like to do with technology, and one thing they like to do without technology. Make sure you don't say it out loud!

Charades Instructions: Taking turns, have one youth at a time act out their activities while the others try to guess what it is. When you guess their activities, switch to the next person.

ASK: What are some positive things that come from being on the internet and on screens? What are some negatives? (Hint: How does your body and mind feel? Who are you getting to hang out with?)

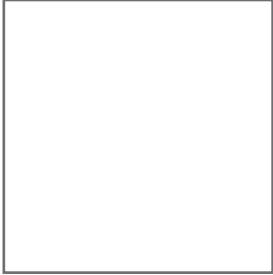


Bingo Activity Page

BALANCE BINGO				
		FREE SPOT		



Bingo Icons





Internet Safety Pledge for K-5th Grade Youth

I pledge to be anethical, respectful, responsible, and resilient digital citizen.



- I spend time with my friends and family without technology, media, or screens.
- I keep a list of my favorite things to do without technology.
- I take regular breaks from screens to keep my body strong.



- I respect the creative property of others by using legal websites to watch TV and movies or listen to music.
- I cite my sources when using others' content or information in a school project
- I respect myself and others by choosing and sharing healthy content.



- I protect my privacy. I share my personal information (like my age, full name, address, phone number, name of school, passwords, or images) online only with my parents permission.
- I get permission before making a login for an online game or website.



- I post things that create a positive reputation.
- I know that nothing online is private.



- I am kind online, and offline.
- I take 10 deep breaths before posting something when I feel angry or upset.



- I share my passwords only with my parent.
- I only open links that I recognize.



Part of being an ethical, respectful, responsible, and resilient digital citizen is making healthy content choices.

This is what I do if I see porn or unhealthy content:

ALERT myself: This is porn. I know unhealthy content when I see it.

CLOSE the lid / turn off my device.

TELL a parent or trusted adult. They can help me.

- I ACT when I see something that makes me uncomfortable, embarrassed, or troubled.
- I ACT when I see unhealthy content.
- I ACT if a friend or adult shows me unhealthy content.

Here are some things that I know:

- Telling my parents or trusted adults will never get me in trouble.
- Feeling curious about porn is normal.
- True friends and trustworthy adults will never ask me to look at porn or violence
- Devices that connect to the internet are used in family spaces like the living room.

Certain parts of my body are private, and private parts have special rules. My body safe boundaries mean that there are only a few people, like parents and doctors, who should see or touch private areas of my body.

I ACT if:

- Someone offers me a reward like money, toys, or treats for something that violates my body safe boundaries.
- Someone threatens to take something good away or do something bad if I won't keep a secret.
- Someone tries to tell me that my body safe boundaries are not important or not normal.

MY NAME: _____

MY SIGNATURE: _____





Cyberbalance Tips for K-5th Grade Parents

Create a healthy media environment in your home.

The most important tip to parents for creating and maintaining cyberbalance in the household is to **model healthy online/offline balance for your children**. Explain the importance of having a varied diet of experiences in order to support family members' overall development and, in particular, their social development.

It is important to note that most social media networks, such as Facebook or Instagram, are not for children under 13. There are some social networking sites designed for the kids under 13, and these have built in, required parental consent and protective measures.

Top ten digital parenting tips:

1. Model healthy online/offline balance and engage in digital parenting.
2. Monitor digital devices and set time limits.
3. Turn off screens at least one hour before bedtime.
4. Charge mobile devices away from the bedroom.
5. Enjoy media-free meals where the emphasis is focused on building strong family relationships.
6. Encourage the habit of completing tasks like homework, before engaging in social media, mobile device conversations or games.
7. Address obsessive and addictive behaviors.
8. Write a list of device-free activities with your child that they enjoy.
9. Discuss managing strong emotions when using digital devices. Resolve conflicts offline, not online.
10. Provide varied experiences to support social, emotional, and physical well-being. Technology is not there to replace family, friends, or staying physically fit.

Why should parents teach cyberbalance?

Modeling cyberbalance can understandably be difficult, when adults' work responsibilities, communications, and entertainment can all rely on digital tools. But now, more than ever, parents need to proactively set limits on where and when media can be accessed. The media environment of your home makes a tremendous impact on your children.

Kids bodies and brains are impacted by their digital habits. They spend more time engaged with media than they do in any activity other than sleeping. And who can blame them? The digital world is loaded with interesting and entertaining activities designed to capture and hold our attention. Device use impacts sleep, focus, and physical wellness. Hunching over screens puts serious strain on the neck and back, and can negatively affect self-esteem and memory. Charging phones in the bedroom or using devices right up until bedtime reduces our capability to relax and sleep soundly. Most parents report concern about the amount of



time their child spends using digital device and are looking for guidance. Scouts rely on parents and leaders to help them manage their time establish healthy tech habits.

Solidifying your Child’s Cyberbalance lessons

Parents can help reinforce the lessons their child has learned about balancing screen time by reading together *Faux Paw Goes to the Games – Balancing Real Life with Screen Time*. This is a great time to establish rules for screen time and media use.

Work together to come up with a list of rules for internet and media use. Where possible use your child’s own words to frame the rules in positive and proactive ways. This list may provide a guide to support this activity.

- I will make and keep rules about when I go online and how long I stay online.
- I take regular breaks from screens to keep my body strong.
- I will use my devices in family spaces, not in private spaces like bathrooms or bedrooms.
- I will charge my devices away from my bedroom in family spaces.
- I will pay attention to one activity at a time.
- I will keep a list of activities I can enjoy without technology.

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Why encourage Cyberbalance? Public Health Research Summary

Kids' bodies, minds, and relationships are influenced by their digital habits.

Fostering a healthy technology environment

Device use impacts sleep, focus, and physical wellness. Developing bodies and minds are particularly vulnerable to health risks. The following reports from academic research, public health, and popular news track the prominence of Cyberbalance challenges and demonstrate the need for awareness, education, and behavior change to address them.

Parental Guidance

Kids rely on parents and leaders to help them manage their time and establish healthy tech habits.^{1,2} Although many parents monitor and limit their children's digital presence in some way, either manually (social media profiles, web history), or with technology-based tools (filtering, blocking), most parents still report concern about the amount of time their child spends using digital devices and are looking for guidance.³ In families with teenage children, connecting on social media platforms can enhance parent-child relationships.⁴ To reduce risk of negative health effects, parents and leaders must consider variables of device use such as frequency and duration, the use of multiple devices simultaneously, and the proximity of the screen.⁵

Body

Bending our necks to lean over phones increases the volume of strain on the neck to about 60 pounds, and over time can lead to the development of a 'dowagers hump' even in teenagers.⁶ Good posture, and resisting the "text neck" (where we hang our heads and slump over devices), helps us maintain high self-esteem, increase positive mood, and build resistance to stress – in addition to simply avoiding muscle strain.⁷ Changes like more sedentary playtime at home and shorter more physically limited in-school breaks for movement are reducing the opportunities children have to increase blood flow to the brain.⁸ Free play where kids roll, flip, and jump sideways, upside down, and right side up is necessary to developing core strength, balance, and a strong sensory system.⁹

Vision

Blurred or damaged vision and dry eyes are common consequences of the near constant exposure to the blue light (high-energy visible light, HEV) that computer and device screens emit.^{10,11} Young eyes are more vulnerable to blue light, because these light rays beeline to the back of a child's eye – where lack of pigmentation means less protection.¹² In extreme cases, symptoms may include words and images moving or shaking on the screen (usually due to eye alignment issues), or even early macular degeneration (leading to blindness).^{13,14}

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Sleep

Charging phones in the bedroom or using devices right up until bedtime reduces our capability to relax and sleep soundly.¹⁵ While the blue light from digital screens can boost attention and mood in the daytime, it interferes with melatonin – the sleep inducing hormone – and the body’s circadian rhythm, leading to patterned sleep disruption.^{16, 17} In addition, sleep deprivation interferes with the development of key leadership skills, such as creative problem solving and emotional stability.¹⁸

Mind

Multitasking reduces productivity and efficiency, and it shrinks attention span.¹⁹ Although kids may claim it’s possible to watch TV and do homework simultaneously, the brain can only truly concentrate on one thing at a time.²⁰ When trying to multitask with multiple screens, the rapid shifting of your gaze – at least 4 times per minute – precludes effective learning by limiting focus to a few seconds per screen at a time.²¹

References

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Healthy Content Choices & Cyberbalance Links Guide

Download all Leader Guides at <https://ikeepSAFE.org/scouting/>

Teaching Healthy Content Choices to K-5th Grade Youth

- *iKeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content (Find leader and youth videos here) -*
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCI70ryDObauySEf2PrmaJx9CwMm3zFk>
- *Faux Paw and a Time to Act PDF -* <http://ikeepSAFE.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Faux-Paw-and-a-Time-to-ACT.pdf>

Teaching Healthy Content Choices to 6-12th Grade Youth

- *iKeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Wise Tech Choices: Healthy Content (Find leader and youth videos here) -*
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCI70ryDObauySEf2PrmaJx9CwMm3zFk>
- *The Science of Pornography Addiction video -* <https://youtu.be/1Ya67aLaaCc>

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- *KeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Wise Tech Choices: Cyberbalance (Find leader and youth videos here) -*
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCI70ryDObbUS12WQGishnLW8iiVLs53>
- *Faux Paw Goes to the Games PDF -* <http://ikeepSAFE.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Faux-Paw-Goes-to-the-Games-FP3.pdf>

Teaching Cyberbalance to 6-12th Grade Youth

- *KeepSafe Youtube Playlist: Wise Tech Choices: Cyberbalance (Find leader and youth videos here) -*
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcCI70ryDObbUS12WQGishnLW8iiVLs53>