

A Modern Family's Parenting Dilemma: Gadgets and Kids

The age of computers and technological gadgets has flourished so much that not only are these gadgets highly advanced these days, they also come at cheaper price tags. Most homes across the country own at least one form of computing device, be it the chunky desktop computer or a palm-sized smartphone.

Parents of today's generation are faced with the dilemma of allowing their kids to use these modern gadgets which often lead to serious addiction or keeping them in the dark and risk raising ignorant kids who thrive among techie peers. It does not help at all that these gadgets are readily available at cheap prices! A kid can even save up on his allowance to buy one for himself! There are also schools who offer an innovative approach to learning, requiring kids to own tablets where are supposed to view their lessons.

What must a parent do? Well, just like any other decision in the family, you must weigh the pros and cons.

Yes, many of us parents have lived a wonderful life, growing up without these gadgets to rule our lives. But then, back in those days, cellphones and computers were worth thousands of bucks so that it is rare for kids to even own 1 for themselves! Today, a couple of hundreds can already buy a decent phone and a few thousands could already buy you a smartphone or tablet!

Does your child need the gadgets right now or in the foreseeable future? That would be quite difficult to judge if your kid just turned 1 but lots of apps can actually keeps toddlers busy, giving you ample time to do chores or simply rest. Also, interactive apps can help teach kids their lessons in a more interesting way. They can even learn their ABCs or counting while playing a game!

When it comes to communication, nothing beats voice calls and text messaging. You simply have to whip up your phone and locate your kids, assuming they already know how to use their own phones. There are also ways to track your kid's location, giving you peace of mind knowing that he is in school, not hanging out at the mall with his friends.

Also, with most of his peers owning a gadget, your kid would feel left out and deprived especially if you do have the means to provide him with one! What if he is the only in the class who doesn't know how to use a computer? Remember that schools often assume that kids have access to computers, requiring projects to be computerized and reports to be done in PowerPoint. It would be quite a struggle for your kid if he does not know how to use technology to his advantage.

The bane of these communication devices is that your child could shut you off, preferring to communicate with friends or play with his gadgets. There are kids whose lives are governed by gadgets, throwing tantrums when you try to pry these off their hands and just spend some quality bonding time with the family.

What must you do? Each parent will have a different situation, with others able to buy top-quality gadgets without batting an eye while others need to scrimp on the household budget to make ends meet and could not readily afford to buy even the cheapest units. Yes, it is also important to consider your budget before buying a device for your kids.

Some parents make these gadgets as reward for excellent grades and good behavior. Should your child earn his gadgets or had successfully persuaded (or tricked?) you into buying him one,

it would surely help limits are set in terms of usage. Set those ground rules early. Examples include:

- No gadgets unless assignments are finished. Better yet, no gadgets the night before a school day.
- How many hours can he use it or until what time?
- What apps are allowed – make sure to install parental control, if possible.
- What are things that he is forbidden to do? Also make sure to educate your child about bullying, phishing, and keeping private information private. “Don’t talk to strangers” is a rule that continues to have extreme importance for kids to follow.

Make sure to stick to these rules and impose them, whether you are keeping the tablet after each use or allowing the kid to bring it to his room. Also, make sure to monitor usage and track apps, text messages, calls, and various things that your child might be doing with his phone.

At the end of the day, there is no clear boundary between right and wrong when it comes to your decision to buy your kids a gadget. What works for 1 parent may not work for another. Again, weigh the pros and cons or simply follow your heart.