

Is Digital Technology Compatible with Homeschooling?

Digital technology has become ubiquitous in our society. It is in our cars, our houses, our workplace, and delivers our entertainment. But a question that we as homeschoolers must face is to what extent we need digital technology in our education process. On the one hand we can extol the virtues of digital platforms, but they also come with some inherent dangers and risks. If we ban the use of digital technologies, we put our kids at a distinct disadvantage when they are older and must interact with the digital world. However, if we totally embrace digital technology, we find we are enabling a harmful environment into our family--an environment that can cause physical, emotional, and spiritual harm for our kids.

So, what should be our approach? How much technology and what types of technology should we allow? How do we evaluate whether it is helping or hurting our children's education? Let's go through five fundamental parental responsibilities with respect to homeschooling and apply them to these questions.

Principle 1: Parents are responsible for the nurture and admonition of their children.

This means that parents cannot abdicate the responsibility for monitoring and controlling the influences in their children's lives. It is not the government's responsibility to regulate the activities and influences of our children. (Although there are government agencies and officials who will try.) We as parents decide where we will live, where we will vacation, the extra-curricular activities that children participate in, and even what the children wear. This principle applies equally to how much and what digital content our children consume. There is no specified minimum or maximum standard that has been determined by empirical research to guide us in this area. Rather, the parent must judge the value of the content and the effect it is having on their children. When it is negative, something needs to change. When it is positive, it can be encouraged. It is quite possible that the limitations set by the parents will be different for different children in the family. Ultimately, the parents must decide what is the right level of interaction for each child.

Principle 2: Parents are responsible for building moral character in their children.

One of the most important roles that we have as parents is building the moral character of our children. The values and ethics that are taught at home have a powerful influence on the children in the home. It is popular in our society today to state that morality is relative and that everyone should be able to do what is right in their own eyes, as long as it does not harm another. But morality is not relative. In every society in the world, murder is considered evil. Almost every society in the world recognizes property rights and establishes laws to protect the weak from being abused by the powerful. These laws are a reflection that there are moral rights and wrongs in the world. In fact, much of the political confrontation that occurs in our society today revolves around competing views of what is the morally right things to do. Whether it is the "#MeToo" movement, response to immigration, response to healthcare, or even man's role in the environment--we are ultimately dealing with questions founded on the moral code of the individuals involved. Parents need to review the digital content their children consume, such as games, movies, and social media, to see if it supports morality or undermines it. Is it true, noble, right, and pure? If not,

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Eliminate it. Monday, 05 November 2018 11:07

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Principle 3: Parents are responsible for ensuring their child's education prepares them for their adult vocation.

The public education systems of today has embraced this aspect of education, often at the expense of others such as character development or safety and security. It is important. However, the parents should have the best knowledge of their children's aptitude and temperament. As such, they are best qualified to guide and direct their children in their educational journey and ultimate vocation. The parent's may not be able to provide the vocational training, for instance they may not be able to teach their child how to be a good civil engineer, dentist, or machinist. However, they can direct their child's education so that they are equipped to successfully acquire that vocational training. This is an area where the parent may encourage the use of digital technologies. Through these their children can understand the principles of a desired vocation or experience some of the daily routine. The digital technologies can also provide current accurate information about a field of study and can help their children connect with others who have similar interests, even if they are not local friends. Of the various responsibilities of the parent, this is the one where digital technology can be the biggest asset.

Principle 4: Christian parents are responsible for discipling their children.

A reason that many parents select homeschooling or private Christian education is to ensure the Christian discipling of their children. Discipling requires direct interaction and discussion. It is through that interaction that teaching and discipling occurs. We see in scripture that Jesus spent three years in constant contact with his disciples. He did not send them off to the synagogue to be trained by experts. Rather he disciplined them by discussing and explaining the daily interactions of the group. Likewise, parents who want to disciple their children must have regular interaction with them about all aspects of life. During those interactions, the parents are discussing the Biblical principles that apply and teaching lessons based upon the behaviors of their children and those around them. The digital environment can help with discipling or undermine it. Through social media, the parents can be engaged with their children even if they are not present with them. But now the warning--through social media your children may be getting disciplined by others who are not providing a Christian worldview.

Principle 5. Parents are responsible for ensuring a safe and loving environment for their children.

A final principle is based upon the parents providing for their children and that would include providing a safe and secure environment. This includes both a healthy environment and protection for the children from dangerous situations or people. Digital technology can create health problems for children, both through the engagement with the technology and the other activities that it inhibits. Anyone who spends hours sitting in front of a screen is more likely to have vision problems. Some studies have also indicated hearing loss, neck strain, and carpal tunnel. In

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In addition, children who are spending hours sitting inside and using digital technology, are not exercising and developing their muscles and coordination. It is important to point out that these problems occur when digital technology use is excessive. The other safety aspect of digital technology is the content and connections to which the children are exposed. There are predators online, and children can not be expected to be wise enough to recognize these situations. The bottom line for this principle is that the parents need to monitor the use of the technology to prevent excessive use and to guard the children from evil content and connections.

So digital technology can be helpful for parents when they are homeschooling their children, but it also contains inherent dangers. The key to the use of the technology is for the parents to monitor and control the use. It can augment their actions and activities, but it does not replace the role of parent.