

Media in the family

Media education in everyday life



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Use of media by children and young people

Access and significance

Children and young people tend to use digital media more frequently and naturally than their parents. What's more, the majority of households are home to many technical devices such as smartphones, games consoles, laptops, televisions and tablets,^[1] so that even younger children are coming into contact with digital media and media offerings very easily. They are often quickly fascinated by the diverse world of media.

Importance of media in everyday life

There are very few everyday situations in which media are not used nowadays. Children and young people play, chat and search for information online. They use their smartphones to listen to music, take photos and make their own videos, which they upload to social media sites such as Instagram and TikTok. Films and series are no longer watched only on television, but also online via YouTube, media libraries and streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.



94%

... have their own smartphone.

On average, young people aged between 12 and 19 spend 224 minutes (over 3.5 hours) online every day. In addition to leisure activities, school tasks including digital homework, communicating with others via video conferencing and online research are increasingly being accomplished digitally. ^[1]

93%

... prefer to use their smartphone to go online.

Media use depends not just on the available media offering and the social environment, but also on the child's level of development. The preferences, interests and experiences of children and young people also influence the type of media they like and how they use them. Certain skills are likewise important for media use. These may vary depending on a child's age and development, for instance how the child perceives and understands things or deals with emotions.


88%

... are online every day.




Media education in the family

Since digital media play such a major role in the everyday lives of children and young people, media education in the family is of great importance. Parents need to act as role models and individual agreements on how to deal with media in the family must be put in place. The FAQ video “Media in the family – Media education in everyday life” contains answers to questions frequently asked by parents, as well as additional tips on the topic.



FAQ video: “Media in the family – Media education in everyday life”

 [To the FAQ video](#)



Additional useful tips on media education in the family


Be clear about the reasons why you use media

Now and again, take some time to consider when and why you and your family members use particular media (offerings). This will help you to be aware of and assess the reasons for your media use. Do you do it for a specific purpose or out of boredom? If the latter is the case, you will doubtless be able to think of alternative activities for your family. Remember that you are also a role model for your child when it comes to media use.

Reduce stress

Media use can also be extremely tiring. Constant availability and numerous messages, e.g. in group chats, can be particularly stressful. You can reduce stress by reading only the messages that really interest you. If you find this difficult or if it gets too much, individual chats or group chats can be (temporarily) muted or groups can be left completely. Trust your gut instinct and let your child know where you stand!

Avoid time traps and set boundaries

Time often flies when using media. Discuss with your child how long they should be allowed to play, surf or watch TV. Make sure that everyone in the family sticks to the time limit. Bans generally won't produce the desired results, but you should nevertheless set clear boundaries. For instance, it can help to draw up a contract for media use together, signed by all members of the family:  www.mediennutzungsvertrag.de

Use media together

Most fun can be had by using media together. You can try out new offerings such as online games or let your child show you the latest social media trends. Shared media experiences give you something in common. If you keep the channels of communication open, it will also be easier for your child to share their positive and negative media experiences.

Offer a variety of activities

Meet other people, laugh and do things together – deliberately organize your free time and everyday family life without media from time to time, leaving your smartphone in your bag or pocket.

Information searches and source analysis

How do children and young people find information?

Whether searching for information on a topic for school or during leisure hours, the first thing children and young people usually do is to use an online search engine such as Google. However, video platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia and social media offerings such as Instagram or Snapchat can also serve as sources of information. Finding information on a topic seems easy at first glance. But not all information and sources are accurate or reliable. Children and young people must therefore first learn how to search for, find and evaluate information in online offerings properly.

Credibility of news

In general terms, the older children and young people become, the more often they also use online TV and radio station offerings, online newspapers and magazines and special news apps. ^[1] When it comes to up-to-the-minute reporting and news, young people are most likely to trust reputable online media ^[2]:



Social media sites such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook rank at the bottom of the list in terms of credibility. ^[1] Many young people are therefore aware of the problems associated with these platforms, e.g. that anyone can post anything on social media, where opinions – not facts – are often what matter. They often find posts dubious and tend to have more faith in traditional media. When it comes to credibility, it is therefore particularly important to know the difference between reputable and dubious sources. Children and young people might also come across fake news or conspiracy narratives online, especially on social media, accidentally or before they are prepared.

What exactly is fake news?

The term “fake news” is made up of the words “fake” and “news”. Fake news, i.e. fake news or news items,



- comprises content such as texts, images, audio and video clips
- that has been deliberately invented, falsified or manipulated,
- and is spread mainly online and via social media sites
- to deliberately deceive, cause public damage
- or generate profits. ^[3]

Protecting children and young people from fake news is almost impossible, despite security settings and safeguards. They often find it difficult to spot fake news, especially when the latest events are commented on, a particular lie is shared widely on social media, or a figure that they identify with – perhaps a popular influencer – makes a claim. It is therefore important that parents discuss the topic with their child and set an example by dealing with news and information critically and competently themselves.

When is information credible?

In particular, children and young people who are searching for information often resort to online sources without checking their credibility. The following points can help you to assess information and sources correctly:


● **Origin and authorship: who wrote the information?**

Who is writing on this website? What is the person's background? Is it an individual or an organization, for instance a research institute or company? Is there a contact or an imprint? If this information is missing, it may point to the fact that this is a dubious website.

Tip: An imprint is mandatory for websites based in Germany, unless the website is for personal or family purposes only.



● **Compare information and check facts**

Can the information also be found in other sources? How is it presented there? The content of reports received via a messaging service, for example, can be checked in a search engine, making it possible to search for the original source. The original sources are important when it comes to spotting fake screenshots of headlines or newspaper articles. A reverse image search provider such as  www.tineye.com can be used to check where an image originally came from and whether it has been edited, for instance. This also allows you to see whether the photo has been taken out of its original context and is actually associated with an entirely different topic.



● **Check for topicality, design and errors**

How up-to-date is a website? When is the information from? Is it updated regularly? Are there any dead links that no longer work? The way the text is composed also reveals something about its credibility. Is it written in a very emotional and sensationalist or subjective fashion? For example, does it make you angry or bewildered? Are there lots of spelling mistakes? Are there any particularly dramatic photos that don't quite fit into the overall picture?

Bear in mind that we have access to a media landscape that offers a wealth of different sources of information. In Germany, press law and the press code define important standards of journalistic due diligence. Accordingly, journalists may only publish news if they have checked where the information comes from, whether it is true and whether it can be verified by several independent sources. ^[4] Moreover, information may not be abbreviated, presented in a different context or weighted inappropriately. ^[5]



Tips on how to search for information and on fake news

Form your own opinion

Having your own opinion means forming an opinion on a certain topic or event with the help of information such as television reports or newspaper articles. The process of forming an opinion is never complete, as new information can always become available. It is therefore worthwhile to reconsider your own opinion from time to time. Children's opinions are initially formed at home, with parents acting as role models from the outset. In adolescence, friends play a decisive role in forming opinions, as increasingly do influencers on social media, for instance.

Be critical

Search engines filter and select results in a targeted manner. In some cases, links are also paid for and therefore appear among the very first hits. Some websites, such as Wikipedia, are open platforms where anyone can publish something or edit existing contributions. Knowing how content can end up online can help your child to better classify and question search results and information. Video clips on social media in particular can often be shortened dramatically or taken out of context. In such cases, it is important to examine the context in which the statements were made and who is sharing them with what intention.

Search for alternatives

A single source is not enough for comprehensive research. Don't rely on the first information you come across, but look for and compare further information and sources. You can use different search engines and read various websites or analog sources such as books or magazines on a topic.

Talk about fake news

Talk to your child about the topic of fake news and spell out what the term means. The best way to explain fake news is to say that it is synonymous with "lies". The internet and internet-enabled devices allow such news to be distributed very quickly.

Don't simply forward content

Messages and information are often exchanged via social media sites such as TikTok and WhatsApp. Make your child aware that they should not simply forward all the information they receive and that they should delete dubious content if in doubt. This is because false content or fake news can also come from friends – for instance, if they have received and forwarded the content themselves without having checked it first.

When you come across fake news, make others aware of it

If you notice that your child is being forwarded fake news by another person, you should address this user directly. This can stop the further distribution of such content, especially if the content was shared without malicious intent or without verification. Publicly shared fake news on social media should be reported to the provider so that it can be flagged as inaccurate if necessary.

At a glance: 5 tips for media education

1. Offer protection and act as a role model

Media are part of the world in which children and young people live. However, the proper and responsible use of media must first be learned. Children's use of and communication via media is determined by their social environment. Bans generally won't produce the desired results, as they just serve to make media and media content even more attractive. Instead, children and young people need age-appropriate guidance and protection, but above all good role models when it comes to media use. As media education mainly takes place within the family, parents should set a good example and reflect on their own media use from time to time.



2. Agree rules together and reflect on your media use

Parents should consider what role media play in their family and how they want to deal with the topic. Rules for media use should be set jointly and adhered to by everyone, so that children and young people can learn to comply with usage time restrictions independently. However, strict time limits aren't always a good idea: time quotas can help children to finish a computer game at a suitable point without losing out, for instance. It is also important to review the negotiated rules from time to time and to adapt them to children's and young people's current preferences and proficiency.



3. Explain and provide guidance

Children and young people are fascinated by media. They are often unaware of the potential risks (e.g. in-app purchases and cost traps) and consequences of their actions (e.g. in relation to copyright and personal rights). Discussions about media, backgrounds and contexts are therefore very important for media education in the family.





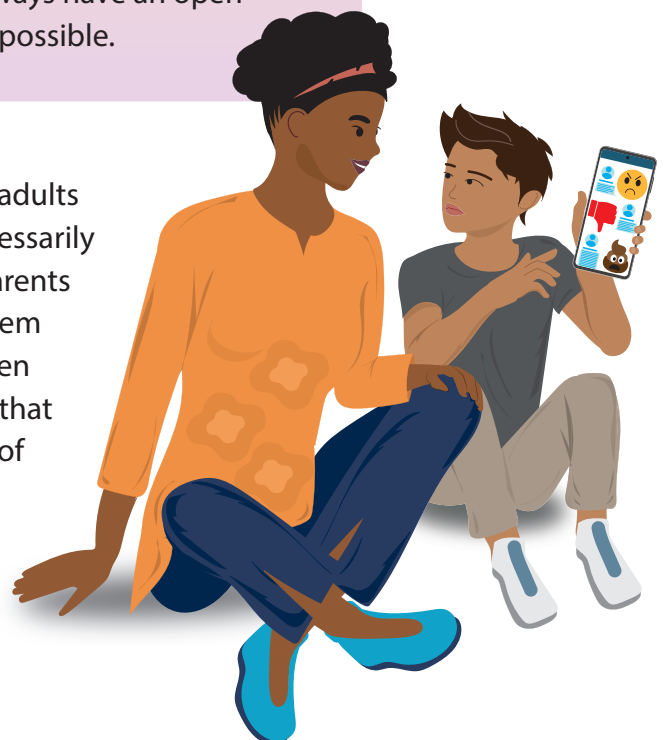
4. Teach children to handle media competently

The older children and young people become, the more independently they want to decide on content and formats. They need competent support from the outset if they are to make good and responsible choices. Parents should talk to their child about legitimate sources and trustworthy websites. They should also give their child age-appropriate guidance on how to behave if they become stressed and on how to protect themselves from disturbing media experiences.

5. Listen and offer support

Children and young people also use media to set themselves apart from adults. As a result, they also experience potentially stressful content, genres and formats outside the family. Children can unwittingly come into contact with content that is overwhelming, despite the rules imposed within the family. In cases such as these, parents act as important points of contact when it comes to processing these experiences. They should always have an open ear and react with as much understanding as possible.

Bear in mind that all children, young people and adults are different. What works for one family is not necessarily the best solution for others. It is important that parents express their worries and concerns and explain them to their children clearly, making it easier for children to understand why rules are important. Anything that seems arbitrary or pointless to them runs the risk of being undermined.



Further information and assistance



The following websites contain German-language links to advice centers and offers of help. Websites can generally be automatically translated into other languages via the browser settings (e.g. in Chrome) or via browser extensions (so-called add-ons). Alternatively, the internet address of the required site can be entered into an online translation program (e.g. Google Translate), which will translate the contents into the desired language.

Advice centers and assistance

Bundeskongress für Erziehungsberatung e.V. – Fachverband für Erziehungs- und Familienberatung

This association for educational and family counseling offers online counseling for 🌐 adolescents and 🌐 parents. It facilitates discussion with people of the same age in forums or via group chats, as well as providing professional advice from experts.

FLIMMO – Elternratgeber für TV, Streaming & YouTube

The parental guide 🌐 FLIMMO helps parents to keep track of the wide range of offerings and make age-appropriate choices. The online service offers tips, ratings and recommendations on age-appropriate offerings for children and young people on TV, streaming and YouTube, as well as on movies.

Juuuport

🌐 Juuuport is a nationwide online advice center run by young people for young people. It provides help on various online topics and problems. Teenage and young adult volunteers help their peers with online problems such as cyberbullying, social media stress, data misuse, excessive media use and fake news.

Medien kindersicher

The online portal 🌐 Medien kindersicher informs parents about technical solutions designed to protect various devices, operating systems, services and apps, and offers step-by-step instructions for specific security settings. The service is provided by the State Media Authorities of Bremen, Baden-Württemberg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Rhineland-Palatinate in conjunction with klicksafe.

Information offerings

Ins-netz-gehen

 www.ins-netz-gehen.de

The information portal offers information and food for thought as well as tips, tests and counseling options for young people on the subject of media use and media literacy.

klicksafe

 www.klicksafe.de

The EU initiative klicksafe aims to promote people's online skills and to help them to use the internet competently and critically. Parents can find plenty of tips on topics such as media education here.

SCHAU-HIN! Was Dein Kind mit Medien macht

 www.schau-hin.info

Parents can find tips on media use and suggestions on media usage times for children of various ages on the initiative's website.

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Grades 1 and 2: "Werbung weckt Wünsche – Werbung erkennen und durchschauen" (Advertising awakens desires – spotting and seeing through advertising) (author: Prof. Dr. Barbara Brüning)

Grades 3 and 4: "Schein oder Wirklichkeit? Botschaften in Werbespots analysieren und bewerten" (Fact or fiction? Analyzing and evaluating messages in commercials) (authors: Marc Doerfert, Anja Monz, Stefanie Reger)

Area of special educational support: "Gamen, daddeln, zocken – Digitale Spiele hinterfragen und verantwortungsbewusst nutzen" (Gaming – questioning digital games and using them responsibly) (author: Annette Pola); "Liken, posten, teilen – Social-Media-Angebote hinterfragen und sicher nutzen" (Liking, posting, sharing – questioning social media sites and using them safely) (author: Selma Brand)

Grades 5, 6 and 7: "Ich im Netz I – Eigene Daten schützen und mit Bildern verantwortungsvoll umgehen" (Going online I – protecting your own data and using images responsibly) (author: Dr. Kristina Hopf); "Fakt oder Fake? Glaubwürdigkeit von Online-Quellen prüfen und bewerten" (Fact or fake? Checking and evaluating the credibility of online sources) (author: Stefanie Rack); "Meine Medienstars – Inszenierungsstrategien durchschauen und hinterfragen" (My media stars – seeing through and questioning presentational strategies) (author: Kim Beck)

Grades 8 and 9: "Im Informationsdschungel – Meinungsbildungsprozesse verstehen und hinterfragen" (In the information jungle – understanding and questioning opinion-forming processes) (authors: Dr. Olaf Selg, Dr. Achim Hackenberg); "Ich als Urheber – Urheberrechte kennen und reflektieren" (As the originator – knowing and reflecting on copyright laws) (author: Dr. Kristina Hopf); "Produkt sucht Käufer: Werbung analysieren – Konsum reflektieren" (Product seeks buyer: analyzing advertising – reflecting on consumption) (authors: Christine Schulz, Undine Griebel, Anja Monz)

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