

## Online Monitoring Tips

Already monitoring or using parental controls?? Great! New to monitoring? No problem. Once you've chosen which tools you are going to use, here are ten ways to approach monitoring as a digital mentor.

1. **Start with conversation and coaching.** Remember that coaching is what prepares kids for safe and healthy behavior online. Parental controls help verify that your kids are making good choices but only digital mentors can teach them the skills.
2. **Tell your kids first, then install.** The goal is to encourage responsible behavior, not to catch your kids being bad. Tell your child that you will be using parental controls before you set them up.
3. **Explain why** you are using parental controls but make it clear that it is not up for negotiation.
4. **Assure your kids that you are not a spy.** Explain to your kids that you will not be reading every line of every text or post. You will merely be scanning things periodically or "spot checking" to verify that all is well.
5. **Don't be a spy.** Hold up your end of the agreement. Parental controls should build trust between you and your child, not erode it.
6. **Don't jump to conclusions.** We often read posts and messages with very little context. Go back to Lesson 2 on Listening for a refresher. Ask, "What else do I need to know?" It is okay for there to be long silences as your child sorts through their feelings about online interactions.
7. **Review which behaviors are in bounds and which are out of bounds.** Just because you use parental controls to connect and communicate doesn't mean that there are no consequences for poor choices. Make sure your child understands your boundaries and consequences.
8. **Involve your kids.** Sometimes our kids don't realize how often they multitask or get distracted during homework or how their language or photos might be perceived by someone else online. The best tools help our kids reflect on their tech habits too.
9. **Use Internet "incidents" as an opportunity to communicate.** Make sure that Internet incidents aren't just a platform for endless lectures or meaningless punishments. For example, if your child is using the search term "sex" it could be that they genuinely want information about sex and sexuality. Use this as an opportunity to start important conversations in your family, not shut them down.

For more resources on digital wellbeing go to [sparkandstitchinstitute.com](https://sparkandstitchinstitute.com)



**Spark & Stitch Institute**

Parenting for Courage and Connection