



PARENTS' NEWSLETTER

MAY 2025

MIND THE GAP!

So many of us as adults, often without even realising, have grown used to filling every pause in the day. We pick up our phones while waiting in line, scroll social media while the kettle boils or tap through apps or play online games during our breaks at work. But it's not just adults. Children are increasingly growing up in a world where every quiet moment of downtime can instantly be filled by an ever-ready digital device to alleviate boredom. That is, unless we increase our awareness of this, make a conscious choice to create space and embrace, rather than fear, feeling bored.

When children never need to experience boredom, they miss out on something important. Boredom isn't something negative or something that needs to be instantly resolved the instant it occurs; it's the beginning of something – an opportunity! It's an empty space where imagination, curiosity, and creativity can begin to stretch their legs. When nothing is planned, and there's 'nothing to do,' the door is opened for all kinds of discoveries.

The problem is that digital devices are always ready and waiting to fill that space. They're quick, convenient, and instantly engaging. But they can also push out other important things such as reading, art, music, conversation, outdoor play, creative thinking, even rest.

The more we allow screens to flood into every gap in the day, the less room there is for children (and us as adults) to invent, wonder, reflect, or just be.

It's so important to intentionally allow and even create gaps in your child's day; times when no device is available, and nothing is scheduled. These can be simple moments: leaving the tablet at home during a car ride so children can look out the window and let their thoughts wander. Keeping the dinner table a phone-free zone, so that conversation has a chance to grow. Letting children be bored at home without rushing to entertain them or sign them up for another activity.

In these moments of 'nothing,' something rich can begin to take shape. Children may pick up a book, start a game, build something, or simply lie back and let their minds drift. They might complain at first. Boredom often comes with a whine because it's uncomfortable and increasingly unfamiliar but that's okay. If we give them time and trust, they usually find their way through it. In fact, is because being bored is uncomfortable that it ultimately motivates us to take action.

So, as parents we can intentionally create the gap, mind the gap and protect it. Leave some time open.

EDITION OVERVIEW

[The Challenges of Group Chats](#)

[WEBINAR
Setting Digital
Boundaries and
Guidelines](#)

[Help I'm a Digital
Parent!](#)

[Top Tips
Tricky Issues
and
Fantastic Resources](#)

[Discussion Starters](#)

[Mind the Gap!](#)

Resist the urge to fill every silence or solve every 'I'm bored' with a screen or other readymade activity. Give your child the gift of space (and boredom) and see what amazing things might just begin to grow there.

Mark Yeowell

THE CHALLENGES OF GROUP CHATS

As children begin using messenger apps to stay in touch with friends, many parents are surprised by the social challenges that emerge, especially with large group chats. What starts out as fun can quickly become overwhelming, confusing, or even upsetting, especially for younger children who are still learning how to manage friendships and emotions.

In group chats, messages can come fast and constantly. Children may feel pressure to keep up, reply quickly and to everything, or worry about being left out. Without tone of voice or facial expressions, it's also easy for messages to be misinterpreted. A joke can come across as mean, or a short reply might feel cold. Emojis can sometimes help, but only when used thoughtfully and even then, they can have multiple or hidden meanings.

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Some children say things over text they wouldn't say in person. This can lead to unkindness or even bullying, especially when group chats spiral. If your child experiences this, let them know they can always come to you. Listen calmly, take their concerns seriously, and support them to make good choices, like muting or leaving chats when needed.

Before giving your child access to messaging apps, consider their age and emotional readiness. Not all kids are ready at the same time. Set clear boundaries, such as only messaging with people they know in real life, and expectations about communicating kindly and respectfully.

Not all messaging apps are the same, so check the app yourself and make sure it's appropriate for your child. If parental settings are available, these may provide helpful, especially in the beginning.

Finally, agree with your child that you'll regularly look at their messages together. Be open about this so it's not seen as covert spying but rather about learning together and staying safe.

SETTING DIGITAL BOUNDARIES AND GUIDELINES

(LIVE WEBINAR FOR GIPPSLAND GRAMMAR PARENTS)

ONLINE

WEDNESDAY 21 MAY 2025

7.30PM TO 8.30PM

Following the well-attended in-person presentation earlier this year, Digital Tweens founder Mark Yeowell returns to support Gippsland Grammar families with the first of three Digital Parenting Webinars.

This practical and engaging session, "Setting Digital Boundaries and Guidelines", is especially designed for parents of Junior School students, but will be equally valuable for those parenting students in Years 7 and 8.

The webinar will explore:

- Co-designing clear and realistic rules for device use
- Setting screen time limits that support family wellbeing
- Creating device-free times and zones at home
- Promoting healthy balance between online and offline life

Mark will also introduce ideas from the Digital Tweens DRIVER model for digital parenting, an approach that helps you to guide and support your child to thrive with digital technologies.

Expect plenty of practical tips and ready-to-use strategies you can implement straight away.

There will also be the opportunity for questions.

Register now to receive your webinar link and join us online for this important session.

REGISTER NOW



HELP I'M A DIGITAL PARENT!

FANTASTIC RESOURCES

Cyberwise

- Designed specifically to help parents and educators "grow up digital" alongside children
- Offers free courses, digital literacy tips, and age-appropriate guides
- Covers a wide range of topics including gaming, social media, digital footprint, and fake news
- Known for its approachable tone and parent-friendly videos

www.cyberwise.org

Connect Safely

- Run by tech experts, educators, and parents
- Offers concise, jargon-free parent guides on apps, platforms, AI, screen time, and more
- Includes Quick-Guides for TikTok, Discord, Snapchat, Roblox, and other trending platforms
- Promotes balanced tech use with a focus on both risks and opportunities

www.connectsafely.org



Be the 'Askable' Parent

You want to be the person they turn to when things go wrong online, not the one they avoid because they fear getting in trouble.

Make it clear that they can come to you, no matter what, whether they've seen something upsetting, made a mistake, or feel unsure about an online interaction.

Avoid overreacting when they do open up; instead, listen, ask questions, and problem-solve together. When tweens trust that you won't just take their device away in response, they'll be more likely to seek your guidance when it matters most.



TRICKY ISSUES

Managing Inappropriate Content Exposure

Even with filters, tweens can stumble upon inappropriate or disturbing content. Keep communication open so they feel safe coming to you with concerns. Teach them critical thinking - when something online feels off, they should stop, think, and talk to a trusted adult.

Utilise the opportunity when they encounter something negative to calmly discuss it - there's always a teachable moment if we can remain calm!

THE DIGITAL TWEENS BLOG

The Digital Tweens Blog is FREE and is published every **Thursday**.

Each edition focuses on a different topic and is packed with information and practical ideas to support busy parents trying to help their child to thrive in the digital world. You can find the blog on our website

www.digitaltweens.com.au
OR

Sign up by clicking the link below and we'll send the blog straight to your email - too easy!



DISCUSSION STARTERS

If you're looking to connect more with your child about their digital world, these gentle, curious questions can open up real conversations, without it feeling like an interrogation.

What's your favourite thing to do online right now? Why do you like it?

This invites a conversation about interests and can help you to better understand your child's online world.

Have you made any new friends online? What are they like?

This helps parents engage with their child's social interactions and develop trust.

What do you find most fun or exciting about playing games or using apps?

Parents can learn about the appeal of certain games or apps and gain insight into their child's experiences.

Are there any videos, websites, or games you've come across that you think are really interesting?

Encourages sharing what they enjoy or find intriguing, without judgment.

Do you ever come across anything online that makes you feel uncomfortable or confused?

Opens the door for discussing anything potentially problematic while showing support.

How do you think people can stay safe when using the internet?

Encourages a discussion on digital safety and reinforces the child's role in their own online protection.

If something happened online that wasn't nice, who would you talk to about it?

A gentle way to assess their understanding of trust and where they feel safe seeking help.

How do you decide when it's time to take a break from your device?

This encourages healthy habits and helps parents understand their child's self-regulation skills around screen time.

MIND THE GAP

**ENSURING BLOCKS OF TIME WITHOUT ANY DIGITAL DEVICES
CREATES GAPS JUST WAITING TO BE FILLED**

A GAP WILL BE FILLED BUT WITH WHAT?

CREATIVITY? THINKING? CONVERSATION? PLAY? EXPLORATION?

WITHOUT DEVICES IN BEDROOMS - READING AND SLEEP CAN FILL THE GAP

WITHOUT DEVICES AT THE DINNER TABLE - CONVERSATION CAN FILL THE GAP

WITHOUT DEVICES ON JOURNEYS - WATCHING THE WORLD GO BY AND THINKING CAN FILL THE GAP

WITHOUT DEVICES IN CLASSROOMS - OTHER FORMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CAN FILL THE GAP

WITHOUT DEVICES IN PLAYGROUNDS - PLAY CAN FILL THE GAP

**CREATE SOME GAPS FOR YOUR CHILD
AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS**

 **DIGITAL
TWEENS**



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