BEFORE YOU CHANGE ANYTHING

Independence expands faster than self-regulation

He is not on it for no reason. Gaming is where he is good at something; the group chat is where his friends are. Block it and he still needs both.

A setting is only half of it. Monitoring without conversation tends not to help, and can work against you. Monitoring with conversation is what the research supports.

And it changes with age. Rules still help at this age. They help less from about fifteen, and a rule handed down can push the other way by sixteen. The same rule, arrived at together, holds.

TRY THIS

The house YOUR WIFI

The network, not the device. Pause it and everything on the wifi stops together.

WHY IT MATTERS

Late-night gaming is the most common disruptor at this age. On nights when boys use a device more than their own usual before bed, they use it longer later that same night. Charging outside the bedroom is the single most impactful routine.

TRY THIS

- Make him a profile and assign his devices
- Schedule a pause 30 to 50 minutes before bed
- Console stops earlier than the homework laptop
- Shift the weekend by an hour, not four

Covers every device on your wifi. Misses anything on cellular data.

The school account BROWNING.EDU · GOGUARDIAN PARENT

Follows the login, not the laptop. Browning filters it, and you can see it.

WHY IT MATTERS

Control apps raise what parents feel they know while lowering what they actually know. Boys disclose more, including being bullied, to parents who talk with them about their online life.

TRY THIS

- Install GoGuardian Parent, sign in with the email on file
- Open it with him, on a Sunday
- Read for patterns, not incidents
- Know which group chats he is in, without reading every message

Covers schoolwork on the Browning account. Misses the machine itself, since this follows the login.

The personal account HIS APPLE ID OR GOOGLE ACCOUNT

His Apple ID or Google account. This is what Downtime, limits, and app approvals attach to.

WHY IT MATTERS

Teens receive a median of 237 notifications a day, nearly a quarter during school hours, mostly from the apps boys use to talk to friends. Seventy-one percent have a phone by age 12.

TRY THIS

- Set it up before you hand the phone over
- A passcode he does not know
- Downtime on, with Block at Downtime
- Limits on, with Block at End of Limit
- Ask which pings he wants, turn the rest off together

Covers the phone, on wifi or cellular. Misses what a shared passcode opens.

WHAT NONE OF IT SOLVES

Settings buy you a structure. They do not have the conversation. Here is how to open it, before you change anything.

Say what is changing, and why
"The wifi goes off at nine thirty on school nights. Not because I caught you at something. Because I want you to sleep."

Let him argue, and mean it
"Tell me what you would set instead, and why. If it is reasonable, we will use yours."

Agree in advance on exceptions
"Ask me before, not after."

Then write it down
Turn this page over, read it with him, change what does not fit, and sign it.

Sources: Common Sense Media, Constant Companion, 2023 · American Academy of Sleep Medicine, SLEEP 2026 · research on parental mediation, 2022 to 2025

FAMILY MEDIA AGREEMENT

Grades 6–8

Developing Responsibility & Digital Judgment

focus.browning.edu

Mark this page up. Connect: what already describes your household. **Extend:** what would stretch it further. **Challenge:** what does not work, or is missing.

Take Care

- I will take care of school and personal devices and report anything lost, broken, or stolen.
- I understand my school Chromebook belongs to Browning and must be returned in good condition.
- I will not modify school devices, install unauthorized apps, or attempt to bypass the school's web filters.

Stay Safe

- I will not share passwords with friends — only with a parent if necessary.
- I will use privacy settings on any accounts I have and review them with a parent.
- I will tell a trusted adult immediately if anyone contacts me in a way that feels wrong.
- I will not share other people's private photos, screenshots, or messages without permission.
- I will not join group chats I haven't agreed to be part of.

Think First

- Before posting anything, I will ask: would I be okay if a teacher, college, or employer saw this?
- I will not bully, humiliate, or exclude anyone online — including in group chats.
- Screenshot = escalation: I will not share screenshots of private conversations.
- I will stand up to bias, racism, and misogyny in group chats — or leave.
- I will disclose all AI use to my teachers fully and honestly.
- I understand that undisclosed AI use may be considered academic dishonesty.

Connecting Screen Commitment

- We will have at least one shared screen experience per week — a film, a series, something we choose together.
- When I game, I will prefer cooperative games with a friend physically present when possible.
- Devices at meals are off — for everyone in the household.

Stay Balanced

- My phone charges outside my bedroom every night — no exceptions on school nights.
- I will not game alone after 9pm on school nights.
- I will take real breaks from screens — walks, meals, conversations without devices.
- I will review my screen time report with a parent once a month.
- If screen use is making me unhappy or hard to stop, I will tell a family member.

Communicate Openly

- I will tell my parents which group chats I'm in.
- If something goes wrong in a chat, I will take it off the phone before it escalates.
- I will tell a parent if I receive something that upsets me or makes me uncomfortable.
- I will be honest about AI use at school and at home.

In exchange, our family agrees to

- To know which group chats he's in without reading every message.
- To talk to him about what we see online before assuming the worst.
- To trust him and talk to him when we have concerns — not surveil first.
- Not to contact other parents about a conflict without talking to him first.
- To be consistent: the same device rules apply to adults in the house.
- To support him if he chooses to leave a group chat that is toxic.
- To have conversations about what he sees — AI, social media, group dynamics — without lecturing.

Isolating screen warning signs — watch for these

- He is gaming alone late at night regularly — especially on school nights.
- He seems more anxious or agitated after being on his phone.
- He is reluctant to put his device down when asked.
- His social life is increasingly online-only and he is harder to reach in person.
- He has withdrawn to his room with a device and doesn't want to come out.

Tell us what you changed

Scan to send your Connect, Extend, and Challenge notes. Nothing attributable to a student or a household leaves the room.

Student signature & date

Parent or guardian signature & date

Revisit: September and January each year, and any time a new platform or group chat emerges

Drafted with AI assistance, then reviewed and edited by Browning faculty and staff. Developed and revised with our community over the past year.