RECLAIMING FOCUS: DIGITAL LIFE DISCUSSIONS

Gaming and Group Chats

Grades 11 to 12 · Tuesday, November 17, 2026. What we talked about, one thing to try at home, and your son's Family Media Agreement overleaf.

97%
of US boys aged 13 to 17 play video games. Six in ten play daily.

58%
of boys who game often feel part of a group that likes them.

70%
of boys who play games with chat have seen bullying or harassment.

237
notifications a day at the median. Snapchat and Discord send the most.

Sources: Pew Research Center, 2024 · Common Sense Media, Boys in the Digital Wild, 2025 · Common Sense Media, Constant Companion, 2023. Links on this page are live.

What the research says

Gaming is mostly social

Almost every boy plays, and most play with people they already know. Gaming disorder affects a small minority, and it is defined by impairment rather than by hours. You can address problems long before that threshold.

Watch the conversation around the game

Group chats add him without asking, make leaving costly, and travel by screenshot. More than half of boys have already stood up for someone being targeted. Spending, game design, and what gaming crowds out matter too.

Change the bedtime routine

Phones and consoles charge outside the bedroom. Screens off an hour before bed. Notifications off overnight, which is a setting rather than a negotiation.

Rules change as he gets older

Limits track with less screen use in younger children, and the effect fades with age. Browning recommends writing the rules with your son, so he can explain why they exist. ABCD Study, 11,868 US children.

Try this at home: Move It Offline

We teach younger boys to notice when a conversation has got too complicated to type, and to move it to a call or in person. This one is for you, not for him.

- Think of the conversation with your son you have been putting off, or having badly over text.
- Write the message you would send to move it offline. One or two lines.
- Then ask yourself: would he recognise you doing this? Has he ever seen it?

Where to start, 11 to 12

Gaming. Agree on responsibilities and revisit them as independence grows.

Group chats. Hand over the managing: Do Not Disturb, muting a chat, leaving one.

Worth reading

- Pew Research Center, Teens and Video Games Today, what older teens report about gaming
- Common Sense Media, Boys in the Digital Wild, 1,017 US boys aged 11 to 17, including the 14 to 17 findings
- Snap Digital Well-Being Index, 2025, what teens tell adults and what they do not, published by Snap

Build your family's agreement together at focus.browning.edu/agreement. The version overleaf is a starting point to adapt. Tell us what worked: forms.gle/hdkaLfXUfnQcNJnz9

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

IN YOUR BREAKOUT ROOM · 25 MINUTES · GRADES 11 TO 12

Your breakout room

These sessions are self-directed. Work through this page together as a group. Everything your room needs is here.

Before you begin · 2 minutes

Two roles first. If they were not assigned before the rooms opened, agree on them now.

A timekeeper, who calls each move. Without one, the first conversation takes the whole session.

A scribe, who takes notes in the chat and posts the room's closing sentence. That sentence is the only thing that leaves this room.

Then introduce yourselves: first names, and your son's grade.

> **Ground rules.** Please read these aloud before you start. Nothing anyone says about their own family leaves this room, and we ask that you not name other boys or other families.

Move It Offline · 10 minutes

Adapted from the Thumbs Down. Speak Up. Family Toolkit, a resource we recommend.

> There is a skill we teach younger boys: knowing when a conversation has got too complicated to type, and moving it to a call or in person. This one is for you, not for him.

- **Read these.** Can we discuss this in person? Hey, this feels like something we should chat about, can I call you? I'm getting confused, can we FaceTime?
- **On your own, two minutes.** Think of the conversation with your son you have been putting off, or having badly over text. Write the message you would send to move it offline.
- **Discuss.** Nobody has to read theirs out. The question for the room: would your son recognise you doing this? Has he ever seen you move something offline on purpose?
- **If someone says he does not talk to them at all,** that is a real answer, not a failure. Ask the room what the guide should say to a family in that position.

The agreement · 10 minutes

Turn to the Family Media Agreement overleaf. It is a starting point to adapt together, not a finished document. Take one question at a time and mark the page as you go. About three minutes each.

Connect

What in here already describes your household? Underline it.

Extend

Now that you have done the activity, what would you add? Write it in the margin.

Challenge

What does not work, is missing, or is wrong for a boy this age? Circle it.

One sentence · 3 minutes

Agree on one change to the 11 to 12 section of the guide. A change, not a topic. Scribe posts it in the chat before the room closes, then everyone returns to the main room.

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

FAMILY MEDIA AGREEMENT · GRADES 11 TO 12

A starting point, not a finished document. Read it together, change what does not fit your family, and build your own at **focus.browning.edu/agreement**

Take Care

- My MacBook is my responsibility — I will maintain it, back it up, and treat it with care.
- I own my digital presence the same way I own my academic work.

Stay Safe

- I will maintain strong, unique passwords and use two-factor authentication on important accounts.
- I will audit my social media privacy settings before submitting college applications.
- I understand that what I post publicly is accessible to colleges, employers, and the world.
- I will tell a trusted adult if I am being targeted, harassed, or pressured online.

Think First

- My college essay is mine — written in my voice, from my experience, by me. AI cannot write it for me.
- I will use AI as a tool for thinking better — never as a substitute for thinking.
- I will disclose AI use fully and cite it in all academic work — no exceptions.
- I will Google myself before college applications and clean up anything that doesn't represent me well.
- I understand that academic integrity at this level means full intellectual ownership.
- Certificates of Distinction require original research — I take that standard seriously.

Stay Balanced

- I will audit my own screen use using built-in device tools and reflect honestly on what I find.
- I will ask myself: is this screen pulling me toward people or away from them?
- Device-free sleep matters even at 17 — I will charge my phone outside my room on school nights.
- I will balance screen time against sleep, academics, physical activity, and real relationships.
- As I approach 18, I will begin developing adult habits around media — not just following rules.

Communicate Openly

- I will have honest adult conversations with my family about my digital life.
- If screen use, gaming, or social media is affecting my wellbeing, I will say so.
- I will be transparent about my AI use — at school and at home.

Connecting Screen Commitment

- I will maintain at least one shared screen experience with my family — even seniors watch things together.
- I know that the habits I build now are the ones I will carry into college.
- I will choose screens that connect me to people I care about over ones that isolate me.

In exchange, our family agrees to

- To treat him as an emerging adult — with the autonomy and accountability that entails.
- To have conversations about adult digital choices rather than enforcing rules.
- To discuss AI discernment honestly — including our own questions and uncertainty.
- To do a social media audit together before college applications — without judgment.
- To model the screen habits and digital integrity we want him to carry into adulthood.
- To trust that four years of Browning have built real judgment — and to say so.

Isolating screen warning signs

- He cannot produce original work without AI assistance and cannot articulate what he contributed.
- His sense of identity exists primarily online — he is curated rather than known.
- He is uncomfortable with silence, hard questions, or time without a screen.
- He is not sure what he actually thinks about anything — opinions arrive pre-formed from feeds.

Student signature & date

Parent / Guardian signature & date

Revisit: Beginning of senior year and before college applications are submitted · Framework: Common Sense Media · Browning Reclaiming Focus Initiative

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