RECLAIMING FOCUS: DIGITAL LIFE DISCUSSIONS

Gaming and Group Chats

Grades K to 2 · 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.

These figures come from research on older children and teenagers, not on boys this age. They are here to show where things are heading. 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: Circles of Consent

Group chats go wrong because a boy does not choose who is in them. That starts as a question about who can reach him at all. Draw three rings: green is his trusted team, yellow is acquaintances, red is strangers.

- Write down who is actually in your son's green ring right now.
- Notice who is on the list, and who is not. There is no right number.
- Then: what would have to be true before someone moves from yellow to green?

Where to start, K to 2

Gaming. Play in a shared room. Chat off, which is already the default for the youngest accounts.

Group chats. None yet. Family messages only.

Worth reading

- Common Sense Media, Parents' Ultimate Guide to your 10 to 12 year old's digital world
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Group Chats and Middle Schoolers
- Thumbs Down. Speak Up., free Family Toolkit, a recommended resource for tweens

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 K TO 2

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.

Circles of Consent · 10 minutes

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

Why this, for boys this young. Group chats go wrong because a boy does not choose who is in them. A third of children are added to chats they never agreed to join. That is a question about who can reach your son, and it starts now.

Draw three rings. Green is his trusted team, family and people you know well. Yellow is acquaintances. Red is strangers.

- **On your own, one minute.** Write down who is actually in your son's green ring right now.
- **Round the room.** Say how many you wrote down, and who is on the list. There is no right number.
- **Discuss.** What would have to be true before someone moves from yellow into green? This is the same decision you will make about his first group chat. Do not try to agree. Noticing that you disagree is the useful part.
- **If the room goes quiet:** does a cousin count? A classmate's parent?

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 K to 2 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.

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FAMILY MEDIA AGREEMENT · GRADES K TO 2

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

- I will be gentle with shared classroom devices and tell a grown-up if something breaks.
- I know devices in our home belong to our family, not just to me.
- I will put devices back where they belong when I'm done.

Stay Safe

- I will only use the internet when a parent or teacher is nearby.
- I will not share my name, photo, or address with anyone online.
- I will tell a grown-up right away if something I see online scares me or makes me feel weird.
- I know some things online are not real — I will ask a grown-up to help me understand.

Think First

- I will not say anything online that I wouldn't say to someone's face.
- I know that things on the internet can be made up — not everything is true.
- I understand that AI makes pictures, videos, and voices that aren't real.

Stay Balanced

- When the screen time is over, I will stop without a big fight.
- I will play outside, read, draw, or use my imagination every day.
- I will not use a device first thing in the morning or right before bed.
- Screens stay in shared spaces — not in my bedroom.

Communicate Openly

- I will tell a parent what I watched or played on a screen.
- I will ask before using any device.
- If anything online makes me feel upset or confused, I will tell a grown-up.

Connecting Screen Commitment

- We will watch one show or film together as a family each week — chosen by all of us.
- Screen time in our house is something we do together, not alone in a room.
- After we watch something together, we'll talk about it.

In exchange, our family agrees to

- To watch with him as often as we can.
- To make sure he has plenty of non-screen options he loves — toys, games, outdoor time.
- To put our own phones away during meals and playtime.
- To keep screens in shared spaces — not in his bedroom.
- To talk with him about what he sees online rather than panic.
- To model the screen habits we want him to build.

Isolating screen warning signs

- He reaches for a screen every time he is bored or upset — it has become his emotion regulator.
- He chooses screens over play or people when given a free choice.
- He cannot stop without a major meltdown.
- He is watching others play games rather than playing himself.

Student signature & date

Parent / Guardian signature & date

Revisit: Each September and any time a new device enters the home · Framework: Common Sense Media · Browning Reclaiming Focus Initiative

focus.browning.edu · Reclaiming Focus: Digital Life Discussions · The Browning School, November 17, 2026
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