

Technology Resources

Know before you buy! Reach out to your local TAG Center *before* purchasing devices. Not all devices can be protected.

TAG LA Walk-in and Kiosk Center:

332 N. La Brea Ave.
Sun-Thurs evenings 8-9.30
323-238-3601 laoffice@tag.org
No appointment needed

Drop boxes for flip phone filtering:

101 N. Poinsettia Pl. 90036
1609 Wooster St. 90035
Place your phone in an envelope with
\$35 and filter specifications.
(Not all flip phones can be TAG-ed.
Email laoffice@tag.org for complete list)

Pre-TAG-ed Phones:

TAG LA Walk-in and Kiosk Center
(Basic phone)

Kosher Cell
848.299.4081 | www.Koshercell.com
(Basic and browser-free smart phones)

Sunbeam Wireless 660.474.0070
www.Sunbeamwireless.com
(Basic phone)

Safe Telecom
www.Thekosheros.net
(Browser-free smart phone)

FILTERING COMPANIES INFORMATION

Gentech

718-GENTECH

gentechsolution.com

sales@gentechsolution.com

Meshimer

718-840-3400

meshimer.com

sales@meshimer.com

Nativ USA

732-719-3040

usanativ.com

info@usanativ.com

Netfree

718-400-8838

netfree.link

info@netfree.link

Netspark

855-SPARK-30

netsparkmobile.com

Techloq

845-237-5501

techloq.com

YeshivaNet

718-YESHIVA

yeshivanet.com

info6@yeshivanet.com



How to Decide about Your Children's Technology Use

Part 1 – Where will it lead to?

When making decisions about technology use, especially for children and teenagers, one of the most important factors to consider is what it may lead to in the future. Although what a child is asking for right now may seem innocent and safe, we must be *ro'eh es hanolad* and realize that introducing any form of technology inevitably opens the door for a lot more to follow.

A simple example of this is the iPod Touch. For the uninitiated, an iPod Touch is an Apple product that looks and acts like a smartphone, with two notable differences: a) It doesn't have 'phone' capability — neither a phone number nor the option to talk to someone on it (unless an app providing talking capability is installed); b) It does not have capability for a service plan on the device itself, like all phones. It can connect to the Internet only with Wi-Fi.

Aside from the absence of these two features, it is exactly like a smartphone, with full access to the Web, an App Store that can download all apps, and all the features and accessibilities of a smartphone, but the stated purpose of its production is as a 'toy' and a device for entertainment.

So, let's say a child asks his parents for an iPod Touch (because *all* my friends have it...). All he wants it for is to download music on it and to take and store pictures. (The *real* reason is because it's a status symbol, but that's a discussion for a different time.) And let's say that he is really a good child and wants to do the right thing — to properly block the device and to ensure that the filter stays on (also a discussion for another whole article).

So, on the surface it looks good. What could be wrong with a fully blocked iPod? The answer is, right now it may be fine. But soon, the pestering is almost guaranteed to start: "I have the device already; I may as well get texting on it." "All my friends are asking why I'm not on WhatsApp!" "I have this device anyway, so I may as well get some shopping apps to do my shopping on!" "Everyone has TikTok! And Instagram! And Snapchat!" And of course, he needs his own email address, because it's "nebbly" to use your mother's email address to get the notes for the test. The list goes on and on.

The same is true for every aspect of technology. When deciding about your child's technology use, remember — it's not only about what it's being used for now, but also where it's liable to lead to.

App Spotlight

Amazon

As online shopping becomes more and more popular, one of the most commonly-used sites is Amazon. Many people have access to Amazon, either in their home – on a computer or smartphone – at work, or at an Internet kiosk. In this article, we will discuss the Amazon app and website, and the issues that users should be aware of when they use Amazon or allow their children to access it.

Content. There are millions and millions of products that are sold on Amazon and other shopping sites, and many of them can be very inappropriate. Even if the user doesn't purchase these items, the very ability to browse through them and see the product details can be very damaging. Unfortunately, we deal with many teenagers (and adults) who didn't have much Internet access, but were exposed to terrible things on Amazon and on similar innocent-looking apps and sites, because their parents weren't aware of these apps' capabilities.

In order to safely shop on Amazon, a proper filter is needed to block inappropriate products and key word searches, as well as inappropriate images that are prevalent on the site. Generally, websites are better filtered than apps, and with some filters, apps are not filtered at all, so the Amazon website with a proper filter is definitely the better way to go.

If one uses an Apple product and just has Apple Screen Time (a.k.a. Restrictions) without an

additional filter, Amazon will not be properly filtered at all, neither the app nor the website.

Prime Video. Any Amazon account with Prime Membership, comes along with Amazon Prime Video, a video-streaming service with tens of thousands of movies. This is an obvious concern for parents who have a Prime account, as the Prime Video feature is right there on the Amazon Website, enabling anyone with access to the website to watch the movies that are on Prime. This is mostly a problem for the website, as, although you can search for movies and see the results on the Amazon app, the movies and trailers can't be played on the regular Amazon shopping app, only on a separate Amazon Prime Video app.

Although this might seem to be a reason to prefer the app to the website, it is not necessary to opt for the app, as all the *frum* filters can easily block the Prime Video feature, and many of them block it by default.

Before using an Internet kiosk or your friend's computer to go shopping, make sure to inquire what sort of filter they have for shopping sites.

Please note: Although there are parental controls on Prime Video to somewhat filter the content, it is not that difficult for children to change the password.

In the coming articles, we will discuss other issues that come along with online shopping *be'H*.

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shop on Amazon, a
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Google Photos

Please note: This article is not meant to condone or oppose the use of Google Photos. It is for informational purposes only. Please consult with your rav before making any decisions about technology use.

Over the past few months, we have been contacted by numerous parents and educators who are concerned about their children's use of Google Photos. This platform is another example of a seemingly innocent technological tool that our children are using for purposes that parents may not be aware of.

Let us explore what exactly Google Photos is, what parents should know about it, and what they can do to protect their children from its dangers.

Google Photos is a platform that has multiple purposes. Every Gmail account comes along with 15 GB of free storage in Google Photos and Google Drive. The main thing people use it for is to store photos and videos in the cloud, in order to free up space on their devices.

The app also has tools to organize photos and folders, and easy-to-use search options to find specific photos, such as by name, event, location, etc. Google Photos also has editing tools to edit photos, as well as tools to make videos, collages, and 'memories' albums.

One of the primary purposes that people use the app for is to share their photos with others. An album can be created and shared with others to either view or to add their own photos in the collaborative album.

Among girls, it has reached a point that every class has at least one shared album that can be viewed and added to. Then there is another one for the grade, the whole school, the neighborhood, town, camp, bunk, etc.

This means that a large percentage of teenagers have access to these shared albums, where they can view thousands of other people's pictures, as well as add in their own.

The following is a list of some of the concerns parents should be aware of:

- The number of accounts girls have access to is astounding. All that's needed to join is a link. Girls are constantly forwarding endless numbers of links to each other, and in the process are getting connected to thousands of people who are also on these accounts. It has become a kind of competition to see who can get onto the most groups!

Often, they don't even know most of the people in the groups that they join. Are they all frum? Jewish? Are there boys or men on these groups? Many of the accounts are listed under names that are obviously not the users' real names.

- Anyone can post any picture or video that they want. There is no moderation, no one in charge of making sure all the content is appropriate.
- Many girls are using Google Photos as a regular Social Media platform!! First of all, there is a 'chat' feature in Google Photos, on which users can post messages for all to see, and to which everyone can respond. This is a bona fide chat, just as on WhatsApp. Girls post pictures with messages on them, others reply, and the chats go on forever. This means, in essence, that a girl can chat with literally thousands of people, many of whom she has no idea who they are!

Additionally, people can 'like' photos for all to see, which, in social media use, is known to cause tremendous anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, as girls compete to see whose photo gets more likes and get obsessed with counting their likes.

“ **Many girls are using Google Photos as a regular Social Media platform!!** ”

MISHOR

AWARENESS • GUIDANCE • SAFETY

Girls who would never use social media, and many times don't even have texting or even their own cell phone, are spending hours on what is effectively a "social media" app.

- It is well documented that social media causes low self-esteem, poor body-image, and pressure to keep up with others. This is because users are constantly being bombarded with images of other people's seemingly amazing lives and touched-up selfies. Vacations, simchas, home renovations etc. are showcased for all to see, causing much discontent and jealousy among the viewers.

This is exactly what is happening on Google Photos, where our children are being bombarded with countless photos of other girls lives.

- We must impress on our daughters the dangers of posting a picture of themselves publicly. Since we don't live in the social media world that the outside world lives in, our sheltered teenagers don't always realize that once a picture is made available to the public, it is impossible to stop that photo from going anywhere.
- By default, all pictures show the location of where the picture was taken, which breaches the child's privacy, as well as opening her up to potential stalkers.
- As there are so many albums that they have access to, they can spend hours scrolling through all the photos, leading to a huge waste of time.

In the next article we will present some tips for parents to ensure the safety of their children.

Google Photos

So, what can parents do to make Google Photos safer for their children? Here are some tips that can be employed:

- Consider not letting your child have their own email address. If they want to view photos on Google Photos, it should be on a family device using their parents email address. This way, the parent can have a handle on what they are accessing.
- Google Photos has some controls that can make it safer. The person who sets up the shared album can set up the following controls:

1. There are two ways to set up a shared album. Either by allowing anyone with the link to join, thereby enabling users to forward the link to others, effectively allowing anyone in the world to join. Alternatively, they can set it up such that only people who are expressly invited by the owner can access the album.

If students in a class are begging their parents to allow them to use Google Photos, one parent can volunteer to be the 'admin' of the album, and only invite email addresses that are verified as belonging to students in that class.

2. The ability to chat, leave comments, and 'like' photos can be turned off by the admin, leaving it with just the ability to share photos, nothing else.

3. A more drastic, yet much safer, approach, which would also be more time consuming, and would probably not be so well-accepted by the students, is to turn off the ability for others to collaborate, which means that only the admin can upload photos and videos, while the rest of the group can just view them.

With this option, anyone who would like to post a photo or video would first need to send it to the admin, who would then decide whether to approve it and upload it. Parents

may want to consider allowing their children to join only those groups that have a competent admin.

- Turn off location on the photos to protect your child's privacy
- Speak with your children about which type of photos should never be shared, even with someone they trust won't forward them, because once a photo leaves your device and can be accessed on a different device, there is no way to know where it can end up.
- Discuss with them why you are allowing them to have Google Photos: In order for them to keep up with their close friends and to see their photos, not as a way to make new 'friends' and to connect to people whom they don't know or who are just casual acquaintances, and not in order to see an endless number of other people's photos and videos. Decide in advance how many groups they are allowed to have access to.
- Consider setting limits how long they can spend on it daily.

Note: Although groups that they have joined show up in their 'library,' there are two ways for children to conceal from their parents how many groups they really have access to:

1. They can hide it from library view; however, it can still be found under the 'Sharing' tab.
2. If they have access to a group with a link, they can just click on the link in their email and access the group, and as long as they don't click on 'join' and don't post, comment, or like, it will never show up in their Google Photos that they have access to this group. Whenever they want to view it, they can just go back to their email and click on the link.

If you would like assistance setting up any of these controls, implementing these ideas, or general guidance, please reach out to Mishor at 732-894-4515 or info@mishor.org.

“ **Parents may allow their children to join only those groups that have a competent admin.** ”