Gift Guide

Parents Together @ CETNS

Contents

Purpose of this guide

Parents Together at Claregalway Educate Together National School (CETNS) aims to offer a collection of best practices to parents about choosing gifts for their children for upcoming birthdays, holidays and other special events. The main focus of this document is around electronic devices, as digital technology is more and more part of our children's lives. We wish to support parents in making informed choices, enabling children to explore the digital world safely and we also want to amplify relevant school policies, especially the Mobile Phone Policy.

*Images in the guide are for demonstration purposes only, they are not meant as recommendation for specific brands or devices.

Mobile phones

According to the [school policy](#) children are not allowed to use mobile phones during school and afterschool hours. We understand there may be good reasons for parents to give a mobile phone to their children, hence we recommend to choose a model that is able to place calls and send text messages, but is not connected to the Internet. Such devices can support uninterrupted communication between parent and child with minimal distraction. Some examples:

Tablets, computers

According to the school policy children are not allowed to use their own personal electronic games or devices during school and afterschool hours. However, tablets, computers can be great tools in education, so using them in the home setting could be beneficial. There is no one-size-fits-all answer on what age is the best to let children start using them. However, before allowing kids near any of these devices, we strongly recommend parents to research how to apply parental control on the respective device and its installed programs, apps.

Watches, smartwatches, wearables

Same [school policy](#) applies to smartwatches and other [wearable digital devices](#). Smartwatches are considered as an alternative to smartphones offering a safe and useful way to test out the digital space for children. They allow kids to message their parents and parents can check children's whereabouts with the embedded GPS tracker. When buying a smartwatch, we ask parents to consider their children's age and maturity level, and the [parental controls](#) and features that the family feels most comfortable with.

Gaming, consoles

Video games can have great educational value too, but because there are so many apps and console games out there, it can feel daunting for parents to keep up-to-date with all the new technologies and developments. In the Resources for safe screen time section of this guide we included websites that not only provide detailed reviews of games, but they add a reliable age recommendation as well. We would like to highlight that online games have higher risk factors associated, but with strong parental control these risks can be minimized.

Resources for safe screen time

Organization/Link	What you can find there
HSE **https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/play/screen-time/**	High-level overview on how much screen time is recommended for each age group of children. Links to additional resources.
WebWise **https://www.webwise.ie/**	Webwise is the is the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre. They promote safer, better internet use through awareness raising and education initiatives targeting teachers, children, young people and parents. They also organize the Safer Internet Day events across Ireland. Their website is full of free resources.
Educational App Store **https://www.educationalappstore.com/**	A discovery, review and recommendation platform for educational apps and websites. They group apps, websites based on subjects, so it's easy for parents to search for educational resources around a specific topic. Although their full library can be accessed by paying members, there are plenty of free blog posts and resources without additional costs or registration.
Common Sense Media **https://www.commonsensemedia.org/**	A non-profit offering transparent reviews of apps, games, movies etc. with age recommendation. They also offer educational materials for parents and teachers about how to help children navigate safely in the digital world. Many free resources, some are membership based.

Resources for safe screen time (2)

Organization/Link	What you can find there
InternetMatters **https://www.internetmatters.org/**	They support parents and professionals with comprehensive resources and expert guidance to help them navigate the ever-changing world of child internet safety. Their resources are organized by typical issues, age group and offer a huge collection on parental controls for different devices and digital spaces.
NSPCC **https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/**	Offer a great overview on Parental Controls.
Safe Kids Games **https://www.safekidgames.com/**	They write recommendations on age-appropriate, engaging, and kid-friendly games for children. The age groups on their website are based on the US education system, but the content is still valuable.