Chapter 10. Teens and Technology

As most people would predict, teens in today’s world use technology often. In fact, understanding how to use technology and computers is a fundamental skill for youth to master for their future success.\(^1\) The 2005 PEW Internet study reported that 87% of teens in the United States use the Internet and 51% of teens go online daily.\(^2\) The study also reported that of those who use the Internet, 89% send or read e-mail, 81% play games online, 69% conduct homework and 43% buy things online.

Further research on United States teens from the 2006 PEW Internet Parents and Teens Survey reported that parents do monitor their teen’s use of the computer with 68% saying they determine the Internet sites their children can and cannot visit and 55% saying they set rules for their child’s online time.\(^3\) However, 65% of all parents and 64% of teens say they think that teens do things online that they would not want their parents to know about.

Recently, Common Sense Media and Benenson Strategy Group conducted over 2,000 interviews with teenagers about their cell phone use.\(^4\) They found that eight in 10 (80%) teenagers have cell phones. This is a 40% increase since 2004. Their research also showed that in an average week, a teen will send 440 text messages.

According to a national survey from CTIA and Harris Interactive, nine out of ten youth send text messages and 42% report they could send a text blindfolded. Nearly half (47%) of US teens say their social life would end or be worsened if cell phone texting was no longer offered, and nearly six in ten (57%) credit their mobile device with improving their life.\(^5\)

Specific highlights addressed in this section are:

- How many hours do teens spend using various kinds of technology?
- Do parents monitor computer and Internet use?
- Are teens using technology to harm or harass others?

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HOURS ON THE INTERNET

Student responses to the question:  “How many hours per week do you spend on the Internet (surfing, instant messaging, chat rooms, e-mail)?”

Key Findings:
Thirty-two percent (32%) of males and 27 % of females report using the Internet less than one hour per week.

Forty-two percent (42%) of males and 46% of females report using the Internet two or more hours per week.

Other Notable Findings:
Of the 218 youth who report they are left out when asked where they fit in best, 30% report spending more than three hours per week on the Internet.

Of the 183 youth who report they choose to be alone when asked where they fit in best, 33% report spending more than three hours per week on the Internet.

Of the 1,393 youth who spend less than one hour per week on homework, 24% report spending more than three hours per week on the Internet.

Of the 307 (5%) youth who report skipping two or more days of school in the four weeks before the survey, 28% spend more than three hours per week on the Internet.
HOURS TEXTING

Student responses to the question: “How many hours per week do you spend sending or receiving text messages?”

Key Findings:

Forty-one percent (41%) of males and 30% of females report sending or receiving text messages less than one hour per week.

Twenty-six percent (26%) of males and 39% of females report sending or receiving text messages more than four hours per week.

Other Notable Findings:

Of the 214 youth who report they are left out when asked where they fit in best, 34% report spending more than three hours per week texting.

Of the 1,392 youth who spend less than one hour per week on homework, 33% report spending more than three hours per week texting.

Of the 307 (5%) youth who report skipping two or more days of school in the four weeks before the survey, 37% spend more than four hours per week texting.
HOURS PLAYING VIDEO/COMPUTER GAMES OR WATCHING TV

Student responses to the question: “How many hours per week do you spend playing video/computer games or watching TV?”

Key Findings:

Twenty percent (20%) of males and 31% of females report they play video/computer games or watch TV less than one hour per week.

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of males and 27% of females report they play video/computer games or watch TV more than three hours per week.

Other Notable Findings:

Of the 3,865 youth (73%) who report their parents do not monitor their computer use, 35% report they spend more than three hours per week playing video/computer games or watching TV.

Of the 1,387 youth (25%) who report spending less than one hour per week on homework, 31% spend more than three hours per week playing video/computer games or watching TV.

Of the 309 (6%) youth who report skipping two or more days of school in the four weeks before the survey, 32% spend more than three hours per week playing video/computer games or watching TV.
DO PARENTS MONITOR TEEN COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE?

Teen responses to the question “To what extent do your parent(s) limit the time you can spend on the computer and/or the Internet for non-school activities?”

Key Findings:

Seventy-four percent (74%) of males and 73% of females report their parents do not limit their computer or Internet use.

Eleven percent (11%) of males and 11% of females report their parents set a specific time when they must get off the computer at night.

Other Notable Findings:

Of the 404 youth who report their parents never or rarely know where they are after school, 77% also report their parents do not limit their time on the computer.
DO PARENTS MONITOR TEEN COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE?

Teen responses to the statement: “My parents know the Internet sites I visit and what games I play on the computer.”

Key Findings:

Thirty-six percent (36%) of males and 26% of females report their parents “never” or “rarely” know the Internet sites they visit or the games they play.

Forty-one percent (41%) of males and 48% of females report their parents “often” know the Internet sites they visit or the games they play.

Other Notable Findings:

Of the 73% of youth who report their parents do not limit their time on the computer, 34% report their parents “never” or “rarely” know the Internet sites they visit.

Of the 31% of youth who report their parents never or rarely know the Internet sites they visit, 895 (56%) report they eat fewer than three nights per week as a family.
TEENS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Student responses to the question: “Do you have an online profile (My Space, Facebook, etc.)?”

Key Findings:

Twenty-three percent (23%) of males and 16% of females report they do not have an online profile.

Of the 77% of males with an online profile, 51% have made it private. Of the 84% of females with an online profile, 66% have made it private.

Other Notable Findings:

Of the 21% of youth who have a public online profile, 26% report they “rarely, sometimes, or often” get unwanted sexual advances on line.

Of those with a private online profile, 28% report their parents “rarely” or “never” know the Internet sites they visit.

Of those with a private online profile, 74% report their parents do not limit their time on the computer.

Of those youth who spend less than one hour per week on homework, 79% report having an online profile.
TEENS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Student responses to the question: “Have you sent or posted something electronically to harm someone else?”

Key Findings

Over 90% of teens have not sent anything electronically to harm someone else.

Other Notable Findings:

Four percent (4%) of 12th grade males and 2% of 12th grade females sent or posted something electronically to harm someone in the 30 days before the survey. Five percent (5%) of 11th grade males and 2% of 11th grade females sent or posted something electronically to harm someone else.

Of the 418 (8%) youth who report their parents “never” or “rarely” know where they are after school, 21% have sent or posted something electronically to harm someone else.

Of the 1659 (31%) youth who report their parents “never” or “rarely” know the Internet sites they visit, 14% have sent or posted something electronically to harm someone else.
TEENS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Teen responses to the question: “Have you ever been the victim of cyberbullying (via electronic device)?”

Key Findings:

Only 9% of males report having been a victim of cyberbullying, but 19% of females report having been a victim of cyberbullying at some time.

Other Notable Findings:

Ten percent (10%) of 10th grade females and 10% of 12th grade females report they were a victim of cyberbullying more than a year ago.

Of the 9% of youth who report they do not feel safe in their homes or communities, 33% also report they have been a victim of cyberbullying.

Of the 382 youth (7%) who have lower levels of parental monitoring, 22% have been a victim of cyberbullying.

Of the 218 youth who report they are left out when asked where they fit in best, 20% have been a victim of a cyberbully and of the 389 youth who report they do not know where they fit in, 18% report they have been a victim of a cyberbully.
TEEN RESPONSES TO BEING CYBERBULLIED BY ANOTHER STUDENT

Teen responses to the question: “Suppose you are a victim of a cyberbully (via electronic device), what would you do?”

Key Findings:

Fifty-one percent (51%) of males and 37% of females would ignore a message sent by a cyberbully. Thirty-one percent (31%) of females would talk to an adult whereas 18% of males would talk to an adult.

Other Notable Findings:

Forty-five percent (45%) of 7th and 8th grade females would talk to an adult if they received a message from a cyberbully. Only 29% of 7th and 8th grade males would talk to an adult.
TEENS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Teen responses to the question: “How often do you experience unwanted sexual advances when you are on the Internet (chat rooms, instant messaging, etc)?”

Key Findings:

More than three out of four youth (86% of males and 75% of females) report they “never” experience unwanted sexual advances when on the Internet.

Twenty-five percent (25%) of females report they “rarely, sometimes or often” experience unwanted sexual advances when they are on the Internet. Only 14% of males report this.

Other Notable Findings:

Of the 9% of youth who report they do not feel safe in their homes or communities, 27% also report they “sometimes” or “often” get unwanted sexual advances on-line.