

## LEADER GUIDE TO TEACHING CYBERBALANCE

Please watch the Scout leader video available at [iKeepSafe.org/Scouting](http://iKeepSafe.org/Scouting) for specific Cyberbalance tips and best practices. Scout leaders are in a unique position to help develop Cyberbalance skills in youth.

- Social norm your Scouting events to be device-free. Explain the value of creating and maintaining spaces where the focus is on real-time, real-life relationships and activities. Emphasize that you know digital technology is not inherently a barrier to relationships, but that it is healthy and relaxing to put it aside.
- Explain that your online profiles are an extension and representation of you, not the whole you. A profile should be an honest depiction, but there is so much more to who you are.
- Have youth create a list of things they like that don't involve a digital device. They can refer back to this list when necessary.

Ultimately, we hope this program can be incorporated with the entire Cyber Chip. For now, the purpose of this content is to make it easy to bring Cyberbalance into your normal Scouting events.

### HELP YOUR SCOUTS FULFILL THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS:

1. Read, commit to, and sign the Level II Internet Safety Pledge.
2. Watch the video "Finding Balance: Part 1" found at [iKeepSafe.org/Scouting](http://iKeepSafe.org/Scouting).
3. Create a list of device-free, media-free activities that they enjoy.
4. Participate in one of the Meeting Activities to demonstrate what they have learned about balancing screen time.
5. Discuss with their family and friends what they have learned.

### YOU WILL NEED PRINTED COPIES OF:

- This Leader Guide
- Parent Tips (*1-pager & short tips-only versions available*)
- Public Health: Why Encourage Cyberbalance? (*for parents and leaders*)
- Level II Internet Safety Pledge (*to be signed by Scouts*)
- Weekly Activities, 6-8 Grades (*to participate in as a group*)

## BACKGROUND ON CYBERBALANCE

Preparing young adults for life means proactively teaching Cyberbalance. As Scout leaders, you can help Scouts avoid the physical, social, and emotional health challenges that are associated with problematic use, or overuse, of digital tools.

Technology, media, and device use becomes problematic when it interferes with daily life and responsibilities. Losing sleep, procrastinating in school, replacing in-person social interaction with screen time, becoming emotionally dependent on social media approval, and weakening of attention span could all be consequences of an un-balanced life.

Lack of balance can harm our bodies as well as our minds. Not only can habitual or problematic media use interfere with the physical exercise we need, but spending so much time bending over our mobile

devices, computers, and keyboards is leading to widespread chiropractic issues – particularly in the head, neck, shoulders, and back.

How do we manage these challenges? The solution is not to take technology away, but to shed light on the benefits and drawbacks of digital tools, set appropriate limits, and encourage creative alternatives to, as well as smart use of, digital media. Harnessing the potential for knowledge, social connection, and global communication while avoiding potential harm means learning skills like:

- Regulation: take breaks from screens and technology to curb emotional dependence
- Social vulnerability: reach out and connect with people offline
- Bystander skills: tell friends no, avoid sites that promote violence and harmful sexual content

## 6-8 GRADERS

At this age youth typically begin engaging in social media. It is important to note that most social media is not designed for or legal for children under 13, and those that are are subject to COPPA: the FTC's federal law designed to help parents remain in control of what personal information websites and other online services can collect from their young children.

For the most part, teens use social media for the same reasons as adults – for benign social contact and entertainment. However, teens are shying away from traditional forms of social media popular with older generations, such as Facebook, and are using other apps with profiles and chat capabilities. Risks associated with “private” apps include GPS location services, that could make it easy for adults and minors to find one another, and the perception that apps are safer or more private places to sext.

Youth at this age start wanting to be in more frequent contact with their friends, and digital communication can easily facilitate that. It is important to emphasize that these sorts of communication (i.e. texting, chatting, etc) is a supplement to real-life relationship development – not a replacement.

Gaming and online gaming is incredibly popular with all ages, but particularly so with boys of middle school and high school age. In addition to the clear entertainment value of games, they can actually be educational, therapeutic, highly social, and a great way to develop problem solving skills. However, it is very easy, particularly for developing brains, to get sucked into a problematic habit of gaming that interferes with everyday life.