

# Family Digital Contract — a template you fill out together

**Download the printable PDF** — 2 clicks and the contract is on your fridge. Or read on to understand how to use it.

## Why “imposed rules” don’t work

Typical scene: parent reads an article about screens, makes a list of bans, sticks it on the fridge. A week later the rules are broken, the kid is annoyed, the parent too. After a month, the paper is gone.

Why? Because those were **parent’s rules for the child** — not family rules. And a child (even a 7-year-old) can tell when something is fair and when it’s one-sided.

This is about something different: a **family digital contract** that all of you — kids and adults — fill out together. Sign. Hang up. Support each other in keeping it. Refresh it every so often.

The key thing: **the parent also has commitments**. Not because “it’s only fair”. Because a child learns from what they see — not from what they’re told. If you scroll at dinner, your child learns that phones beat conversation. No ban will change that.

## How to do it — a family rules-writing evening

1. **Pick a specific evening** — 45 minutes, no rush. No phones at the table (obviously).
2. **Start with a conversation**, not with writing. Why do we have rules in the first place? What matters to our family? Where does it hurt now?
3. **Everyone fills their template separately** — child fills theirs, parent fills theirs. No dictating.
4. **Read yours aloud to each other**. Talk. A child can add something to the parent (“dad, add ‘no phone on walks’”). Parent can add something to the child.
5. **Sign it**. Each your own. Hang on the fridge, a visible door, somewhere you’ll see daily.
6. **Agree on a review in a month** — what’s working, what isn’t, what do we change.

This isn’t a corporate workshop. It’s a family conversation with a piece of paper.

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## Child’s template — computer

The computer is for learning and play. In our family we follow these rules:

### 1. Time and plan (I know when to stop)

- **Screen time limit:** parents set how much time I can spend in front of all screens daily (computer, tablet, phone, TV). If I already used the tablet or watched a movie, that time counts. I always ask: *“Can I use the computer now?”*
- **Duties first:** I start computer play after I finish chores and meals.

- **Eye breaks:** I take short breaks. Look out the window, move around.
- **Stop on time:** when parents say time's up, I shut down. No computer right before sleep.

## 2. Safety and secrets (my data matters)

- **Personal data is secret:** I don't give my real name, address, or school to anyone online.
- **Password is a secret:** only my parents and I know it.
- **Strangers online:** if someone unknown tries to chat, I call a parent. I don't reply alone.
- **Only with permission:** I don't download new games, programs, or files without parental consent.

## 3. Respect for others (I'm kind)

- **Only approved sites:** I use sites parents have seen. If something worries me — I show it to parents. They'll listen.
- **Respect rule:** online I'm the same as in life. I don't write or say mean things.
- **Others' stuff is theirs:** I don't use images, music, or text that belong to others.

## 4. Taking care of the device

- **Clean hands** before the keyboard.
- **Food and drink** away from the computer.
- **Gentle** — no hitting, no slamming.

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Child's template — phone

The phone is a parent's tool. When I use it, these rules apply:

### 1. Ownership and consent

- **The phone belongs to parents.** I use it only with permission.
- **I always ask:** *"Can I use the phone now?"*

### 2. Purpose and time

- **Phone for learning:** books, educational apps.
- **No games on the phone** — games only on console / computer.
- **Only at home:** I don't take the phone outside.
- **Screen time limit:** phone time counts toward the daily total.

### 3. Safety and respect

- **Personal data is secret** (name, address, school).
- **Passwords are secret**, parents know them.
- **Respect rule:** same online as in life.
- **Only with permission** — no new apps without consent.

#### 4. Phone care

- **Clean hands, gentle use**, no eating nearby.
- **I don't change settings** or delete files.

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### Parent's template — the mirror

This is the part you won't find in most "screen rules for kids". And it's the part that makes the biggest difference.

##### 1. Time and plan (I'm present when I'm here)

- **I have my own screen limit** — I talk about it with my child.
- **No phone at family meals.**
- **I put the phone down when my child speaks to me.**
- **No scrolling in bed next to a falling-asleep child.**
- **No doomscrolling in front of my child.**

##### 2. Safety and privacy (I respect my child's digital footprint)

- **I don't post my child's photos** on social media without consent.
- **I don't tag, I don't describe** private details of my child online.
- **I ask for consent before taking a photo** I plan to share.
- **My passwords are mine** — my child learns the same.

##### 3. Respect (I model what I expect)

- **I write online in the tone** I want to see from my child.
- **I don't mock strangers online** in my child's presence.
- **When tech frustrates me, I say why** — I don't pretend everything's fine.
- **I don't argue with my partner over Messenger** within earshot of my child.

##### 4. Taking care of devices (my gear is gear too)

- **I don't swap phones yearly** — I show that things can last.
- **I repair before replacing.**
- **I clean up after myself** — cables, chargers.

##### 5. Mutual support (here's how we help each other)

- **When I see my child exceeding time** — **I remind calmly**, no shouting.
- **If my child sees me breaking a rule** — **they can tell me**. And I won't get offended.
- **Once a month we sit down together and check in** on how it's going.
- **We change the rules together** when they stop fitting.

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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## After filling it out

**Hang the contract visibly.** Fridge, hallway, child's door. Not in a drawer.

**Schedule a monthly review** — 10 minutes, a Sunday evening. What's working? Where was it hard? Do the rules still fit?

**When someone breaks a rule** (child or you) — it's not a disaster. It's a **conversation opportunity**. "I noticed I broke rule X today. Why? What can I do differently?" That conversation teaches more than 10 punishments.

**After six months, write it from scratch.** Your family isn't the same as six months ago. The rules shouldn't be either.

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## Why this works

Not because paper has magic powers. Because:

- **The child is a co-author, not a recipient** — and that's the difference between "I have to" and "I choose to".
- **The parent signs their own half** — the child sees that rules apply to everyone.
- **There's something shared to keep up** — the family has a project, not a regulation.
- **The monthly review** creates a natural rhythm of tech conversations that would otherwise happen only during breakdowns.

No Family Link, no DNS filter, no parental control will replace that one evening at the table with paper and pen.

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## Print and try

**Download printable PDF** — ready format, print double-sided (child–parent back-to-back).

Or copy the text above into your own document and adapt to your family. Or rewrite it by hand — that's an even better keepsake.

If you try this process at home — let me know how it went. [Subscribe to the newsletter](#) and join conversations with other parents figuring out the same thing.