

TAKE
A SIDE

Debate

Directions: Read the article. Study the facts. Decide what you think. Write an opinion essay.



Are Screens Hurting Your Friendships?

Experts worry that technology is getting between you and your pals **BY LAUREN TARSHIS**

There's nothing that 10-year-old Ben enjoys more than a Sunday with his screens.

He might start out with a session of *Minecraft* and then move on to a marathon of the show *Chopped*. After lunch, he enjoys some basketball highlight videos. Before bed, he squeezes in a *Star Wars* movie or a show about sharks.

A perfect day, right?

Maybe not.

Something is missing from Ben's day, something that doesn't have a glowing screen or a power cord: a friend.

This could be a problem for him. Some experts say that many kids are spending so much time with their screens that they're missing

out on building close friendships.

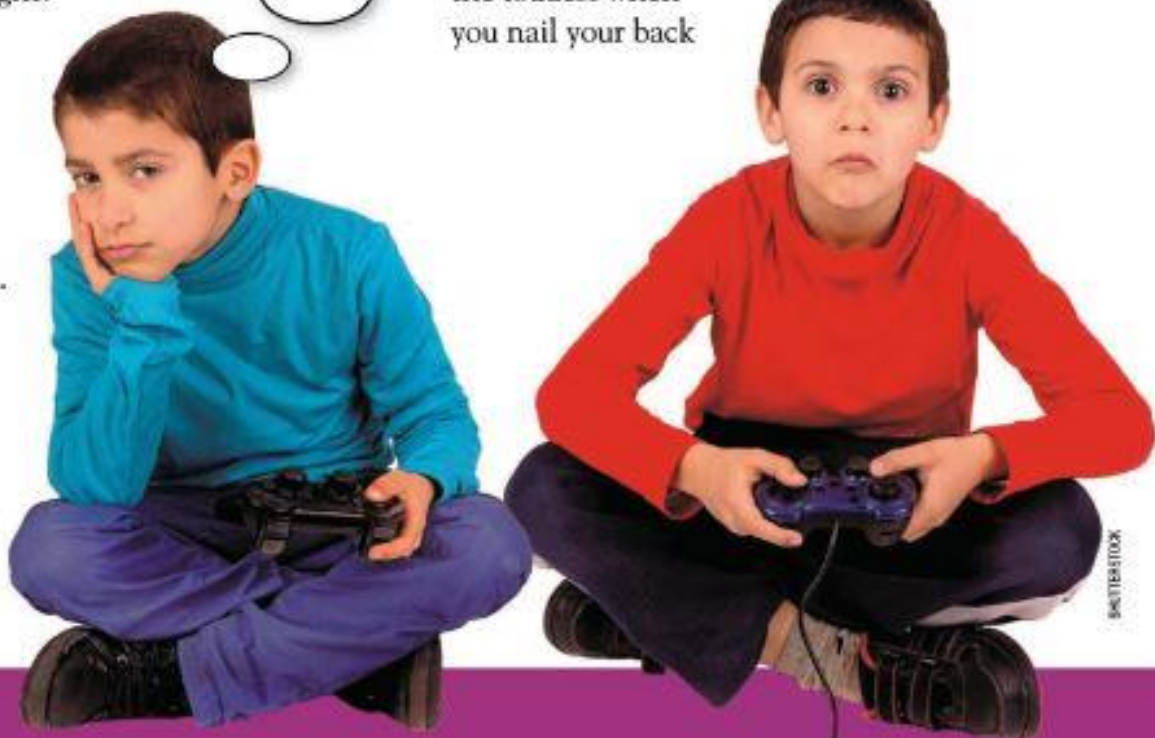
Could this be happening to you?

Bond of Trust

You know how to make a close friend—by finding a person you like and spending time with him or her. You share adventures, trade secrets and ideas, and build a bond of trust.

As you get older, a real friend is more than just a playmate. He's the guy who helps you bounce back from a Little League strikeout, or the girl who cheers the loudest when you nail your back

Wait, who's that person next to me? Oh, right! It's my friend!



walkover. Your close friends celebrate your successes and support you through tough times.

But experts fear that technology is stopping kids from forming these deep and important friendships.

Many kids are like Ben, so content to be at home with their videos and games that they don't feel the need to get together with friends.

Meanwhile, social media sites like Instagram give us the feeling that we have friends—hundreds of them. But there's a big difference between a "friend" who likes your cute dog video and one who will stand by your side when you are bullied.

Limiting Screen Time

Even when kids do hang out together, technology can get between them. "Kids are sitting together, but they're not talking," says Lisa Strohmman, a psychologist who studies technology and kids. "They're focused on screens, not each other."

Certainly, not all kids let their screens get between them and their close pals. Some are able to limit their screen time. They make time each week to see friends—in person. And when they have a friend over, they keep their eye on that person, not

on a screen.

We talked with Ben about this. Next weekend, he promises he's going to have his best friend, Gabe, over—after he plays his *Minecraft*.

"That's OK, right?" Ben asked us.

We don't have the answer—but luckily he'll have plenty of time to talk it over with Gabe. ■

Is technology getting in the way of your friendships?

Go back to the article to find three ways technology can affect friendships. List them on the lines below. Then decide whether each one affects YOUR friendships, and check the YES or the NO box.

YES

Tech affects me.

NO

I'm keeping it real.

1

2

3

Think about what you wrote above and decide whether technology is getting in the way of your friendships.

Write your decision in one sentence on the line below. It can become the thesis statement for an opinion essay on this topic.

FIND AN
ACTIVITY
SHEET
ONLINE!