

Situating Technology for Teens

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“Parents want their kids to excel so there shouldn’t be too much focus on the electronics,” Castellano said. Once upon a time hooking up an entertainment system meant plugging in a television. Then it was surround sound. Now it involves integrating everything from command central in the den to the Xbox in the kids’ rooms. “It definitely involves organization and the proper running of cords.” The more electronics that are in the same room, the messier things can become. “Like cords should go with like cords, and everything might need to be re-run,” Castellano said. Zip ties can also de-clutter entertainment.

Hanging a flat screen TV high in a teenager’s room will allow her to use her Wii while freeing up more space. And newer cabinets hide screens and cut down on the appearance of clutter. (Just don’t open the cabinet doors.)

Most important, Erhardt said, “Definitely have time limits.” Limit it to a specific time, or allow them to choose their own time and agree to put down the device at the agreed hour, she said.

Often the best time for parents to talk to their teens is in the car. “I let him use it in the car, but not all the time,” she said.

Putting a breakfast bar or even a couch in the kitchen or dining area so that teens can have a conversation with a parent cooking dinner is a good idea, they said.

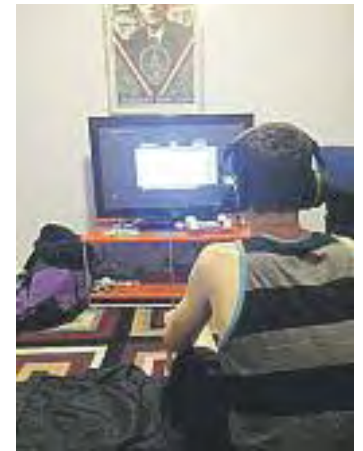
One trend Castellano is seeing in Lamorinda is a tendency to upgrade home electronics when a family buys a new house or undergoes a major renovation – and the electronics for the kids are included in the upgrade.

“It depends on what they want. More teens are patching into high-definition entertainment systems, and they want them integrated and in the same place as their TVs. It depends on the degree people want to go to.”

He even predicts a major move to 90-inch screens.

“That,” 15-year-old Sam exclaimed, “would be awesome. But not for the Xbox. I like a smaller screen for that.”

Go figure.



Big isn't always necessarily better. Many teens prefer smaller screens to play their games.

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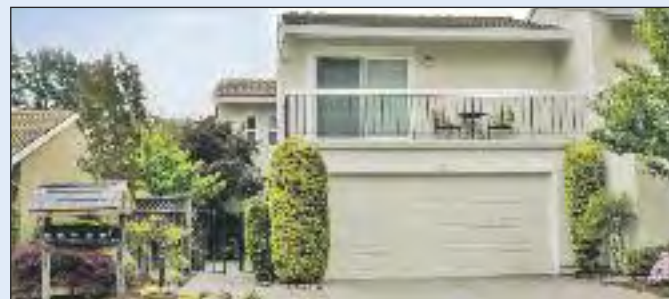


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