

Google Admin Guide to Safe Screen Time at School

How to find the balance between secure
and supportive e-learning and student
screen time restrictions.



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Screen time has become an essential and, until recently, an irreplaceable component of modern education. However, without proper oversight, it can negatively impact student learning, online safety, and well-being.

Whether or not your school needs to respect new screen time restrictions, monitoring how digital tools and devices are used in the classroom is fundamental. It helps create a balanced hybrid learning environment and reduce online distractions, anxiety, and safety risks.

GAT Labs helps schools maintain control over instruction in Google Classroom and become compliant with new legislation. In this guide, we walk you through key steps to improve classroom and device management, promote digital literacy, and safeguard students online.

New Screen Time Restrictions for Students: What Does It Mean for Schools?

Although they vary across states and countries, enacted or proposed student screen time limits usually focus on the same educational levels, mainly kindergartens and primary schools.

Student Safeguarding

New laws intend to improve student social development, mental health, and learning performance. Sometimes this means schools need to modify policies to meet updated, age-appropriate screen-time standards. They aim to decrease student access to non-educational online content, including social media ([the UK case](#)) and AI tools ([New York State](#)), minimize unnecessary screen time, and limit the collection of personal data from minor students.

Classroom Management

Schools need to monitor and limit instructional screen time (as in [the Los Angeles Unified School District](#)), which may vary by educational level. Some laws allow exceptions for students with special needs, assessments, and computer science classes, and schools should be able to adjust screen time for different grades, groups, and classrooms accordingly. In some schools, teachers will need to complete mandatory training to minimize overreliance on technology.

Device Policies

Some legislation disallows 1:1 device models, requiring schools to align device management with new regulations at specific grade levels. This may include restricting school devices to on-campus use rather than allowing students to take them home. In countries like [Poland](#) and [France](#), regulations target only cell phones and similar small devices at certain grades.

Understanding Digital Classrooms Challenges

Screens entered classrooms to diversify learning methods, support teacher efforts, and streamline communication. Since the world young people live in has become increasingly virtual, it seemed like a natural step.

However, over reliance on digital devices and services carries drawbacks, too:

- Young people can become easily addicted to online devices and struggle to focus on non-entertainment activities, like learning.
- Students who rely solely on digital tools and resources and typewrite on a keyboard often read and learn less efficiently than in traditional classrooms.
- Children whose online activity isn't monitored or restricted may access age-inappropriate or harmful content that affects their social-emotional development.
- Students overusing screens in daily life often suffer eye fatigue, speech delays, premature health conditions, as well as well-being issues related to FOMO, short attention spans, and other developmental problems.

How to Enhance Student Screen Time Management

While specific restrictions vary worldwide, they regulate screen time by grade level and enforce age-appropriate policies to protect student online safety and well-being.

Even if new laws don't affect your school, you might be involved in discussions about screen time's impact on education. In the evolving digital age, it's essential to keep your e-learning standards and practice up to date.

That's why we recommend reviewing your current classroom and device setups, as well as your online safety policies.

GAT Labs provides schools with a range of solutions that help control student screen time in Google Workspace and Chrome. They allow institutions to align their digital education landscape with specific regulatory requirements and best practices.

1. Monitor Student Screen Time & Activity



School Outcome

You enforce grade-specific screen time limits and ensure student browsing remains educational only.

How to Achieve This

1. Review student browsing history for specific time frames to identify online behavior patterns:

- What they searched for (was that education-related or not?)
- What sites they visited (were they education-related or not?)
- When they visited these pages (did it occur during or outside of class or school hours?)
- How long they stayed on them (did it affect their attention in the class?)

Knowledge Base Article: [How to view the overall student browsing activity.](#)

2. Adjust your school policies accordingly, restricting access to, for example:

- Social media channels
- Gaming sites and other entertainment pages
- YouTube, excluding specific learning resources

Knowledge Base Article: [How to block sites using Site Access Control.](#)

3. Allow students to use a specific website (e.g., YouTube) during a given time range, like school hours on certain weekdays only.

Knowledge Base Article: [How to set up a time limit for YouTube.](#)

4. Set up instant alerts to get notifications to react quickly when students:

- Attempt to access banned websites
- Search for keywords related to non-educational content

Knowledge Base Article: [How to block website visits with alert rules.](#)

5. Monitor student online activity in Chrome in real time. You can review current browsing for each student and classroom and report in detail on past events in the browser in specific time frames.

2. Protect Student Online Safety in Real Time



School Outcome

You keep students and digital classrooms safe from inappropriate online content and distractions and identify concerning behavior in real time.

How to Achieve This

1. Restrict age-inappropriate and distracting online content and websites:
 - Harmful online materials (specific URLs and keywords related to disturbing, explicit, inappropriate content and behavior, such as cyberbullying, self-harm, eating disorders, etc.)
 - Unvetted AI online services that don't support student social-emotional development, pose security or cyberbullying risks.

Knowledge Base Article: [How to set up alerts for inappropriate language.](#)



Admin Tip: Ban millions of inappropriate pages automatically with GAT Shield's predefined CIPA-compliant category.

2. Set up automated, instant notifications for disturbing or concerning behavior and new keywords that aren't included in your ban policy.

Knowledge Base Article: [How to set up alerts for AI deepfake nude search.](#)

3. Monitor student online activity in Chrome in real time to identify new safety threats, distractions, harmful behavior, and trends. Quick detection lets you inform the relevant team about student well-being issues and address them professionally.

The screenshot displays the GAT Labs Shield web interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: Dashboard, My Domain, Audit, Browsing, Downloads, Extensions, Searches, Chats, Geo Reporting, Site Access Control, Rules (selected), Block Page Config, and Alerts. The main content area is titled 'Rules' and includes a '+ New Rule' button and a 'Test Rules' button. Below these is a table of rules with columns for Rule name, Active status, Action, and Category Type.

Rule name	Active	Action	Category Type
Block gambling for students	✓	Allow	Predefined
Block music	✗	Block	Predefined
Block Wikipedia	✓	Block	Predefined
Allow: www.coolmath.com	✗	Allow	User Defined
Allow: www.science.nasa.gov/kids	✗	Allow	User Defined
Allow: www.storybird.com	✗	Warn	User Defined
Allow: www.codemonkey.com	✓	Allow	User Defined
Block YouTube	✗	Allow	Predefined
Block Celebrity	✓	Allow	Predefined
Allow sites to Teachers	✗	Block	User Defined

An overlay window titled 'New Alert Rule From Template' is open on the right. It shows a 'Type' dropdown set to 'Page content inspection'. Under 'Selected rule type', it says: 'Receive a notification when a user opens a website, which has one of monitored phrases, or types one of the monitored phrases on the page.' The 'Template' dropdown is set to 'Bad Language - Core - Characters masked with Symbols'. The 'Template description' states: 'The alert will trigger on anytime a keyword is contained on the page, either on it's own or as part of another word. The alert is sensitive, and it will trigger if somebody tries to mask their profanities with a symbol, for example "Sh!t", "h0m0", "you're g@y". Also requires common word "you" to also be on the page too. Add more keywords to reduce the alerts sensitivity. This is set not to trigger on wikipedia.org by default. Words contained in the regex are as follows: b*tch, b!t*job, C*cksucker, d*ck, douche, f*ggot, f*ck, homo, n*ggt*, n*gg*, p*ssy, p*ssies, s!t, wh*re, you're g*y.' A 'Continue' button is at the bottom right of the overlay.

3. Become Audit-Ready with Detailed Insights



School Outcome

You stay informed on all student online activities, can report them in detail any time, and demonstrate evidence of compliance or potential issues.

How to Achieve This

1. Audit the entire student and classroom online activity at any time. Report on school policy implementation and compliance with CIPA and other children online safety laws. Provide trusted evidence on potential mental health concerns.
2. Automate reporting and save time with scheduled reports. Set up a report to be automatically sent to your inbox for quick oversight of the latest student online activity covering the last 7 days.

Knowledge Base Article: [How to schedule reports in GAT Shield.](#)

Schedule a Report: Browsing

Details and schedule

Adjust the output location and frequency of the report. You will be able to edit them on the [My Scheduled Reports](#) page.

Name

Name *
Math Report

Type

Browsing

Predefined columns

☒ Predefined columns

Schedule

Every weekend

The report will be launched weekly at 12:05 AM (UTC) on Saturday.

Recipients

Recipients *
Okaty@dev.bp.gatlabs.com

Output & Location

Output Type *
Spreadsheet - Google Drive

Custom Drive Folder Path & Filename

Path & Filename

Customize Report

Adjust filters for the desired output of the report. A predefined set of columns will be used when generating the report. The data below includes last 7 days. The data exported covers last 183 days (retention period).

Website domain: youtube.com Website title: Website URL: User: + More

Website domain **Website title** **Website URL** **Time on website**

youtube.com	TIM Overview - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	3s	9 ho
youtube.com	TIM Overview - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	2s	11 ho
youtube.com	TIM Overview - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	2min 8s	11 ho
youtube.com	POOM - A Remarkable PICO-8 Po...	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	2s	5 da
youtube.com	POOM - A Remarkable PICO-8 Po...	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	18s	5 da
youtube.com	POOM - A Remarkable PICO-8 Po...	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	2s	5 da
youtube.com	POOM - A Remarkable PICO-8 Po...	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	26s	5 da
youtube.com	POOM - A Remarkable PICO-8 Po...	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	1s	5 da
youtube.com	8-bit doom - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	6s	5 da
youtube.com	At Dooms Gate (8-Bit) - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	5s	5 da
youtube.com	At Dooms Gate (8-Bit) - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	2s	5 da
youtube.com	At Dooms Gate (8-Bit) - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	4s	5 da
youtube.com	8-bit doom - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	3s	5 da
youtube.com	8-bit - YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	42s	5 da
youtube.com	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	27s	5 da
youtube.com	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	20s	5 da
youtube.com	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?...	4s	5 da

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4. Manage Digital Classrooms



School Outcome

You maintain control over screen time in every classroom, allowing teachers to manage student online activity while enabling access to educational tools and resources.

How to Achieve This

1. Assign teachers to relevant classrooms so they can fully supervise students and manage their behavior and screen time during the Google Classroom session:
 - Manage what students see in the browser (open, close, and lock tabs)
 - Share educational resources (online materials and Google Drive files)
 - Refocus student attention (direct communication, screen control)
 - Allow or disallow specific URLs for students in the class

Knowledge Base Article: [How to lock student screens with Teacher Assist.](#)

Knowledge Base Article: [How to monitor blocked or allowed URLs during class with Teacher Assist's Site Control History.](#)

2. Audit student browsing history in each classroom to analyze how they leverage online resources and whether they are focused on class or distracted online. Adapt school web filtering policies if needed.

Classroom Insights			
Classroom: 8th Grade			
Details	People	Classwork	Grades
Browsing History		Website Control History	SAC Events
Teacher	Action	Website	Date
emma.carter@school.com	Allow	drive.google.com	Jul 1, 2024 07:53:35
ethan.ramirez@school.com	Block	facebook.com	Jun 23, 2024 10:41:07
maya.lee@school.com	Block	youtube.com	May 13, 2024 11:03:22
noah.johnson@school.com	Allow	drive.google.com	May 13, 2024 18:03:22
olivia.garcia@school.com	Allow	drive.google.com	May 2, 2024 09:15:56

5. Oversee Student Device Usage



School Outcome

You monitor devices your students use in the classroom in real time as long as they stay logged in with their school Google account.

How to Achieve This

1. If you provide school devices, assign each of them to specific students. For the BYOD model, ensure your device inventory, including student and device data, is up to date, and refresh it as soon as a change occurs.
2. Secure device usage to keep student screen time under control:
 - Prevent students from logging into unassigned devices with Google accounts, ensuring individual activity tracking remains accurate.
 - Monitor device location with automated alerts when it's been detected outside the specific area (i.e., the campus). You don't need to notify device users when it happens.

Knowledge Base Article: [How to set up location-based alerts and access control for Chromebooks.](#)

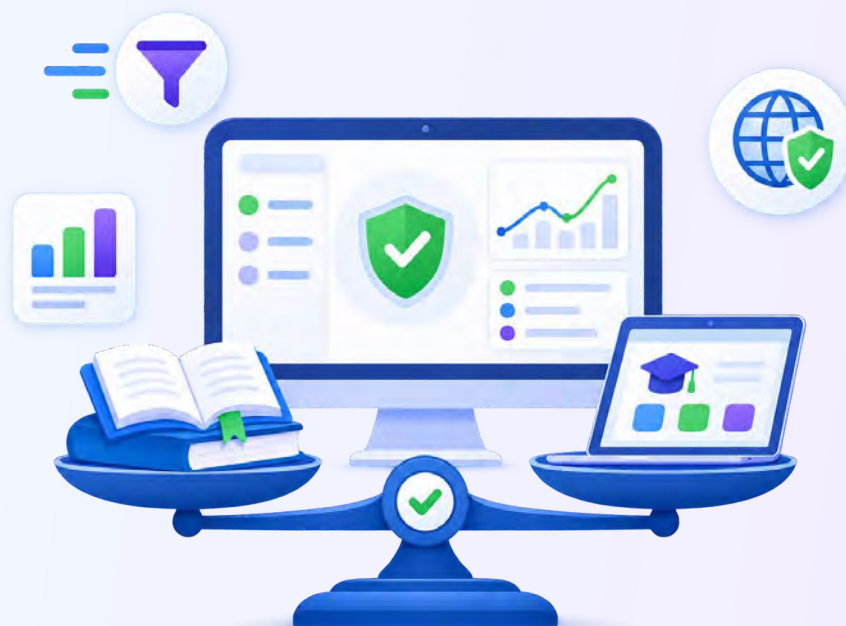
What's Next?

Maintaining a safe and balanced e-learning space requires deep visibility into what's happening in your digital classrooms every day.

The middle ground between offline and online instruction may vary for each school and classroom, as every teacher and student is unique. However, creating a successful hybrid learning environment is always based on continuous monitoring and policy adjustments.

Since screen time overuse and digital safety risks at schools grow, so does the challenge of constantly supervising student online activity.

GAT Labs enables admins to **automate web filtering, user browsing management, device security, and reporting**. As a result, schools can support student digital literacy and practice e-learning while keeping digital classrooms safe and healthy.





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