Responsible Use Policy
for Computers and Internet

Introduction

The Post Oak School uses computers to teach the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that students will need as successful and responsible members in the community, and as life-long learners. The school expects those who use the computers to do so in a way that is consistent with The Post Oak School’s educational mission and this policy.

In today’s world, Post Oak School’s community spans beyond our campus. All members of the Post Oak community (including guests) are expected to abide by the terms of this document any time they are using Post Oak’s resources, acting as a representative of the school, or otherwise communicating the school name or image.

Since electronic media change constantly and rapidly, as does the “netiquette” among users, this policy cannot lay down rules to cover every possible situation. Instead, this policy expresses the School’s philosophy and sets forth general guidelines to be applied to all users, whether they are students, faculty/staff members, volunteers, or other guests.

We follow clear principles

In both the real world and the virtual one, on campus and off, common principles apply. As a Montessori school, we advocate and require concern and respect for both persons and materials. At The Post Oak School, we value and teach the conscientious sharing of limited resources, respect for the work of peers and neighbors, and a careful balancing of society’s needs and rules with our personal freedoms and responsibilities. Whether on the computer or in person, our expectations are the same.

Users need to demonstrate a sense of responsibility and may not abuse their privileges.

Users have no expectation of privacy on the computer

The Post Oak School retains the right to monitor, view, or access at any time the data stored in any given computer, including but not limited to: Internet activities, email activities and accounts, network activities and accounts, and all data and/or software stored on desktops, laptops, and storage media. The Post Oak School does not expect to regularly monitor or inspect users’ files and data, but retains the right to do so at its sole discretion.

Using the Internet requires caution

Do not transmit personal information (home address or telephone number, your age or personal interests, personal photographs) through email or non-secure websites.

Any email should be written as if it were a public document that might be read by a third party: embarrassing or private emails can be forwarded or made public to others beyond the user’s control. Users should not put anything in an email that they would be ashamed of seeing in The Houston Chronicle the next day. Nothing should ever be included in an email that might subject the sender or the School to embarrassment or legal action.
Report the transmission of inappropriate content immediately: Individuals have access to a rapidly increasing number of easy-to-use electronic communication tools. This poses opportunities and challenges for both families and schools. Misuse of these tools, regardless of where it occurs, can have serious effects on individuals as well as the school community, and will be treated as a significant offense. Beginning in upper elementary and extending through middle school, students receive lessons on appropriate ways to represent themselves using electronic media. As part of these lessons, we discuss the implications of sending hurtful, vulgar or explicit messages, photos or video content. Our advice for any member of the school community receiving such content - Do not erase any messages: they may be needed to take action against the offender. Cyberbullying (electronically transmitted threats and insults intended to embarrass, harass, or intimidate), and the electronic transmission of inappropriate content by a member of the Post Oak community will result in disciplinary action.

Prohibited software and sites: student use of Internet chat or instant messaging software, social networking sites, online games, sites that promote hate or violence or any other questionable material is prohibited on all school computers, without exception.

All Internet access at the school is filtered by commercially produced product that attempts to block possibly objectionable sites. But no filter is perfect. The filter is updated weekly, and the software company establishes the filtering criteria. The filter creates an activity log of all occasions where a website is blocked, and the school’s System Administrator regularly reviews that log.

Use of Social Media

Social media are powerful tools and have the potential to reach audiences far beyond The Post Oak community. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone.

Interacting online with other community members is no different than interacting with these individuals or groups face to face, we are required to maintain dignity and respect as outlined in the Student Conduct in the Parent Handbook.

Recognize that:

- Social networking sites are increasingly interconnected in ways that may be largely outside the direct control of the users on any given site and social media activities may be publicly visible.
- Serving as a role model is a critical aspect as a member of The Post Oak community.
- According, you must exercise appropriate discretion when using social media when those communications can impact The Post Oak community.
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else’s identity.
- What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you would not want friends, parents, teachers, or future employers to see.

Community members are discouraged from publishing on public media (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, etc.) photos or videos of other students or community members without first obtaining the written permission of all those involved.

Legal and ethical behavior is expected

Unacceptable uses of the network include, but are not limited to: tampering with the school's wiring, software, or hardware; trying to gain unauthorized access to the school's system by hacking; using another user's login information, or accessing the files of another user without that user's consent; using the network for commercial or political purposes; or damaging the network by purposely activating a virus, worm, or Trojan horse program.
The law forbids illegally reproducing copyrighted material. Comply with all software licenses and copyrights. Do not download or install any commercial software, shareware, or freeware onto Post Oak School computers, nor copy any software from these computers, nor agree to any end-user license agreement, without the express permission of the System Administrator. The Post Oak School specifically forbids the use of BitTorrent, Kazaa, Limewire, or any other peer-to-peer file-sharing software whose primary or most likely purpose is copyright violation.

Respect all copyrights: do not steal music, videos, software, or ideas. When doing research on the Internet, you are committing the crime of plagiarism if you copy material directly rather than putting it into your own words. The use of term-paper vending-machine sites is specifically prohibited.

Maintain a high standard of civility: no material containing offensive, profane, rude, inflammatory, threatening, violent, sexually explicit, harassing, abusive, or impolite language or images is to be created, viewed, or accessed. In the event that any such material is encountered accidentally, log off immediately and report the event to the classroom teacher and System Administrator.

**Violations will be taken seriously**

Access to the computers owned by The Post Oak School is a privilege, not a right, and may be restricted or revoked at any time if usage is not consistent with the educational goals of the school.

Ask if you do not understand any of the cautions or prohibitions in this policy.

Consequences for any violations of this policy include but are not limited to: loss of network access privileges (including Internet access); loss of computer access privileges; disciplinary action for students, as outlined for major misbehavior in the “Student Conduct” section of The Post Oak School’s Parent Handbook.

For helpful information on these issues and more, see the iSAFE web site at [http://www.isafe.org](http://www.isafe.org).
Both a parent and the student are expected to read and sign this Responsible Use Policy Agreement to indicate that they know of and consent to follow this policy. Permission to use the School's computers will be granted upon the return of this signed Responsible Use Policy Agreement to the System Administrator.

**Post Oak School Parent Agreement**

As a parent of a computer user(s) of The Post Oak School, I understand I will be legally responsible for my child's actions. I have discussed the rules with my child(ren). If necessary, I have read through and paraphrased the policies in terms appropriate for their understanding. I understand that this Agreement will be kept on file at the school.

OR

As a computer user (volunteer or guest) of The Post Oak School, I have read and understood this policy, and I understand that this Agreement will be kept on file at the school.

Name (printed): ____________________________

Name (signature): ___________________________

Date: ____________________________

**Post Oak School Computer User (student) Agreement**

As a computer user at The Post Oak School, I have discussed the rules with my parent(s), have asked any questions I had, and understand the rules.

Name (printed): ____________________________

Name (signature): ___________________________

Date: ____________________________ Student’s teacher: ____________________________