

EMBRACING TECH HELPS KEEP SENIORS CONNECTED

#KEEPSENIORSSAFE: TECH SKILLS CAN HELP KEEP FAMILIES CONNECTED AMID COVID-19, SAYS JENNIFER BOGER



JENNIFER BOGER
Column

"We just rolled up our sleeves and did it," said my mother-in-law. Words usually reserved for tasks like cleaning the bathroom, she used for the top-of-the-line iPhones she and my father-in-law acquired for themselves last December. With that purchase they instantly transitioned from "landline" to "smartphone" users, but what this means is different for everyone.

For those who are keen on technology, the world is filled with exciting possibilities. For those who are less inclined, all these gadgets can feel overwhelming. Here are some things to think about when "rolling up" one's sleeves and engaging with technology:

Focus on what you want to do: With so many choices, it's easy to get sidetracked. Focus on what you want to do, then explore technologies that help you do that.

Leverage your friends and family: Out of necessity, many people's technology proficiency has increased because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Talk to others about what has worked for them and to get ideas of what might work

for you. Make the learning curve less steep by asking someone for help.

One size does not fit all: Finding the right technology is like buying a pair of shoes. There are different shoes for different tasks, foot sizes and tastes. Finding your best fit with technology may take patience and trying a few options.

You can learn what you don't know: There are online tutorials about how to do almost anything. YouTube is a wealth of narrated step-by-step "how to" videos that you can pause and rewind as needed.

Don't be afraid to play: It's harder to break technology than it used to be. Trial and error is one of the best ways to learn what something does. If you feel things are getting out of hand, take a break and start over. Remember, you don't need to know everything a device or program does to use it.

Before COVID-19, my in-laws got iPhones for a sense of security and connectedness. The pandemic has incentivized them to try new things. They play a weekly bridge game online, order groceries to their doorstep, actively use the family's real-time text chat, have celebrated birthdays and even read grandkids bedtime stories via video calls.

With so many technologies to choose from, there is likely something that will work for you. Imagine what you would like to do and go for it!

Dr. Jennifer Boger is an assistant professor in systems design engineering at the University of Waterloo.

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"People who live six months south and six months here (snowbird) should definitely have access. That makes it their primary residence."

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"It's been a long-time problem that is just not going anywhere anytime soon."

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"We have same issues and have no choice."

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"Many small businesses are in the exact same boat. Hopefully there will be more legislation put through to help."

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Web: www.mediacouncil.ca



newsroom@theifp.ca
IndependentAndFreePress
@IFP_11

WHO WE ARE

Publisher
Kelly Montague
Regional Managing Editor
Catherine O'Hara
Managing Editor
Karen Miceli
Distribution Representative
Iouliana Polar
Real Estate
Kristie Pells
Regional Production Manager
Manuel Garcia
Halton Media General Manager
Jason Pehora

CONTACT US

The Independent & Free Press
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1
Phone: 905-873-0301
Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480
Fax: 905-873-0398

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