

Screen Time

Screen time is free time spent sitting or reclining in front of televisions, computers, tablets, and similar screens. Excessive screen time (over 2 hours a day) can put young children at risk. Listed below are some of the effects that screen time can have on children.



Excessive screen time...

can be habit-forming. The more time a young child is engaged with screens, the harder it becomes for them to turn the screens off when they are older.

for children under 3 is linked to irregular sleep patterns and delayed language acquisition.

takes time away from meaningful interactions with parents, family members, and caretakers.

can be associated with problems in later childhood, including lower math and school achievement, reduced physical activity, social issues, and increased BMI.

has been associated with increased early childhood aggression.

simply put, means less time involved in creative play—the foundation of learning, constructive problem-solving, and creativity.

Reducing screen time...

may lead to decreased interest in screen time as children become older.

can help prevent childhood obesity by allowing time for more physical activity and less exposure to television advertising for unhealthy foods that target children.

could encourage academic achievement, a healthier diet, more physical activity, and the opportunity for older children to participate in school and community activities.

can start now! Limiting exposure before age 6 greatly reduces the risks of excessive screen time.

Do yourself and your young children a favor—create an electronic-media-free bedroom and be a role model by reducing your own recreational screen time.

Managing Screen Time

Limiting nonproductive screen time and breaking up time spent sitting during productive screen time, regardless of your age, is important. Since face-to-face interactions promote language development most effectively, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends co-viewing with infants and toddlers. Children over the age of 2 will engage in screen time as fully as they do any activity. And, like any other activity, it can have positive and negative effects.



Parents and caregivers should set limits around screen time and be involved in children's media use. When children practice away-from-screen activities, they have more fun and learn more about navigating in the real world.

Keep Track of Screen Time. Make a daily log of the amount of time your child spends on screens and the types of content he or she is viewing. The AAP states that the quality of the content is more important than the device or hours of screen time.

Set Limits. When it comes to setting limits, you want the limits to be reasonable and attainable. You also want to set limits that are developmentally appropriate for your child. Develop a plan with your family to limit screen time, and discuss the reasons why you are setting limits.

Be a Role Model. Try to limit the amount of recreational time you spend on your devices. During the periods when you allow your child to use screens, become more involved by co-viewing, such as playing apps or watching a television show together. Talking with your child about what you are viewing can help facilitate learning. Being a role model for children demonstrates the value of productive time spent away from screens.

Create Screen-Free Zones. Consider designating certain times of the day as screen-free, such as when completing homework (that is not on a computer), during dinner, a few hours before bedtime, or during family time. You can also designate certain areas of your home as screen free, such as bedrooms.