



Screen limits for young children

Young children learn best from face-to-face interactions with caring adults. Time spent using screens can be a lost opportunity for children to learn in real time.

Setting limits

It's best to keep young children's screen use to a minimum:

- For children under 2 years old, screen use is not recommended. The exception is video chatting with caring adults, such as family members.
- For children 2 to 5 years old, limit screen use to about an hour or less per day.

Children younger than 5 years old need active play and quality family time to develop important life skills like language, self-regulation, and creative thinking.

Too much screen use also increases children's risk of becoming:

- Overweight
- Sleep-deprived
- Less ready for school and learning: Young children need exposure to books and language, play, and opportunities to learn social skills.
- Less able to pay attention
- More aggressive
- Less able to self-soothe
- Nearsighted (when objects farther away look blurry)

How to set limits

Develop a family media plan to guide screen use at home.

Turn off devices at mealtimes, when reading with your child, or when doing things together as a family.

Turn off screens when not in use, especially background TV.

Avoid using screens for at least 1 hour before bedtime and keep screens out of bedrooms. They interfere with sleep.

Replace screen use with activities like reading, outdoor play, and crafts.

Be a role model by limiting the time that devices get in the way of daily life. Put face-to-face interactions ahead of screens. When adults spend too much time using screens, children may act out to get attention.

Using screens in a positive way

When young children do use screens, make it a shared activity. Watch or play with them and talk about what you're seeing or doing. To ensure quality content:

- Choose educational, age-appropriate and interactive content. The best apps or sites have clear learning goals and encourage participation.
- Pay attention to messages about gender, body image, violence, diversity, and social issues, and limit exposure to advertising and commercial content.
- Make sure you are familiar with the content your child is watching or the apps they are using.
- Create playlists or choose appropriate channels.
- Use a media rating system to help guide their viewing choices.



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