



Managing Screen Time

Screens, it seems, are now an inevitable part of the modern human experience. There are many wonderful things that these tools do for us. However, research shows that for young children whose brains are still developing, parents need to proceed with knowledge and caution. Initial research studies show that many hours of screen time for young children can negatively impact the way the brain develops.

Here are some helpful guidelines for managing screen time:

- Babies younger than 18 months should have no screen time except for human interaction like chatting with grandparents or other family members.
- Toddlers 18–24 months can have screen time with a parent or caregiver interacting with them. No more than an hour of screen time is recommended for children three and under.
- Be with your young children when interacting with screens or video games. Let your child teach you how to use the apps or games with which they like to interact.
- Schedule unstructured playtime into your child’s day. This is important for healthy brain development and creativity.
- Have a no screens rule for family meals. Family social interaction over meals is important to a child’s development in so many ways.
- No screens an hour before bed. Screen time can impact both the quality and quantity of sleep. Sleep deficits can affect our overall health, our mood, and our ability to learn.
- Develop a “media plan” for your family. Here’s a resource that may help: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>.



References: Bradely-Ruder, Debra. (2019, June 19). *Screen Time and the Brain*. <https://hms.harvard.edu/news/screen-time-brain>; Reinberg, Steven. (2019, Nov 5). *Too Much Screen Time May Stunt Toddler’s Brains*. <https://www.webmd.com/children/news/20191105/too-much-screen-time-may-be-stunting-toddlers-brains#1>; *Family Media Plan*. (N.D.). <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>; *Screen Time Guidelines for Babies and Toddlers*. (N.D.). <https://kidshealth.org/MainLine/en/parents/screentime-baby-todd.html>