



## How much screen time is too much?

Have you ever wondered if you or your children spend too much time in front of screens? If so, you are not alone. Once only for entertainment value, screens now play an increasingly important role in our daily lives. They connect us with family and friends, allow us to seek and share information, read, play, and learn.

Whether for work, school, or play, screen time quickly adds up. Screen time refers to the amount of time you use devices like televisions, video games, computers, phones, or tablets. Children younger than 6 years of age average 2 to 3 hours of screen time each day. Older children may spend 7 hours per day using screens, and adults report an average of 11 hours per day. Televisions are the most frequently used screens, but cell phones and smart phones are a close second.

Screens can improve our daily lives. However, if we are not careful about when or why we use them, they could interfere with daily activities like sleep, exercise, or family time. Inappropriate use of screens replaces important face-to-face interactions and can negatively affect children's communication, motor skills, problem solving, social skills, and emotional health. There is still a lot to learn about how screens can hurt or help us, but in the meantime, there are ways to keep screen time in check.

Set limits. This includes limits for time spent using screens as well as the type of content accessed. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers recommendations for screen time limits for children depending on the age of the child. Children younger than 18 to 24 months should avoid screens except for video chatting. Children aged 2 to 5 years should limit screen use to no more than one hour per day of high quality, educational programming like "Sesame Street." Children aged 5 to 18 years should have consistent limits that allow children to have "unplugged" time, do physical activity, participate in family time, and get a full night's sleep.

Interact with children when they use screens. Co-viewing or engaging with children during screen time prompts social interaction. This provides an opportunity to talk about what they see and help them process and learn. For older children, this provides an opportunity to talk about and learn safe, responsible media use.

Create screen-free zones. Have specific areas or rooms of the home designated as screen-free. Bedrooms are a great place to start. Keeping screens out of the room can help you get a better night's sleep. Meal times are a great time of day to designate as screen-free. This provides an opportunity for face-to-face communication and allows for increased awareness of what and how much you are eating.

Create a media plan for yourself or your family. Going through the process of creating a media plan will help you become more aware of what kinds of screens you use, why you use them, and how much time you spend using them. Your personalized plan will provide limits for the time and types of screens you use. Create a personal media plan and learn more at [commonsensemedia.org/AAPtoolkit](https://commonsensemedia.org/AAPtoolkit).

## References

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