Screen Time and Very Young Children

Most of a baby's brain development happens in the first 2 years of life. That's why it's so important for babies and toddlers to explore their environment and experience many sights, sounds, tastes, and textures. Interacting and playing with others helps children learn about the world around them.

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So, experts recommend limiting the amount of time that babies and toddlers spend in front of a screen. That's good advice — but in today's world, it can be tough to keep babies and toddlers away from all the TVs, tablets, computers, smartphones, and gaming systems they'll see. Screens are virtually everywhere, and it can be challenging to monitor a child's screen time. To complicate matters, some screen time can be educational and support a child's development. How do you manage your child's screen time? Here are some important things to consider:

Problems with Screens

Too much screen time and regular exposure to poor quality programming has been linked to:

- Obesity
- Inadequate sleep schedules and insufficient sleep
- Behavior problems
- Delays in language and social skills development
- Violence
- Attention problems
- Less time learning

Keep in mind that unstructured playtime is more valuable for a young child's developing brain than electronic media. In today's tech and media-driven world, many parents use screens to keep young children entertained or distracted while they juggle other needs. It works. Screens captivate children's attention in a way almost nothing else does, allowing parents a bit of a breather. However, children younger than age 2 are more likely to learn when they interact and play with parents, siblings, and other children and adults, so it is critically important to provide off screen experiences.

By age 2, children may benefit from some types of screen time, such as programming with music, movement, and stories. By watching together, you can help your child understand what he or she is seeing and apply it in real life. However, passive screen time shouldn't replace reading, playing or problem-solving.

The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages media use, except for video chatting, by children younger than 18 months. If you introduce digital media to children ages 18 to 24 months, make sure it's high quality and avoid solo media use. For children ages 2 to 5, limit screen time to one hour a day of high-quality programming. As your child grows, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn’t work as well. You'll need to decide how much media to let your child use each day and what's appropriate.
To ensure quality screen time:

Do Your Homework:

- Preview programs, games, and apps before allowing your child to view or play with them. Organizations such as Common Sense Media has programming ratings and reviews to help you determine what’s appropriate for your child’s age. Better yet, watch, play or use them with your child.
- Use parental controls to block or filter internet content.
- Ask your child regularly what programs, games, and apps he or she has played with during the day.

Be with young kids during screen time:

- Play together and talk about what you are seeing on the screen in age appropriate games or shows.
- Seek out interactive options that engage your child, rather than those that just require pushing and swiping or staring at the screen.
- Make sure your child is close by during screen time so that you can supervise activities.

Set a Good Example:

- Turn off screens when not in use
- Don’t leave screens on in the background
- Turn off your phone when you are playing with your child

Schedule plenty of non-screen time into your day:

- Play and hands-on learning with adults, and friends
- Face to face interactions cannot be replaced by any type of technology!
- Be sure your child is physically active every day

Avoid:

- Fast-paced programming, which young children have a hard time understanding,
- Violent content and apps with a lot of distracting content.
- Eliminate advertising on apps, since young children have trouble telling the difference between ads and factual information.

Consider applying the same rules to your child’s real and virtual environments. In both, play with your child, teach kindness, be involved, and know your child’s friends and what your child does with them. Also, keep in mind that the quality of the media your child is exposed to is more important than the type of technology or amount of time spent.

Trick or treat, smell my feet!

Check out this cute idea! This is the sweetest little spooky scene, that also serves as a memory keepsake! If you don’t have the supplies on hand to make this, everything could be purchased at your local dollar store for super cheap!
Encouraging digital literacy - At some point your child will be exposed to content that you haven’t approved and devices without internet filters. Talk to your child about the situations that could occur and the behavior you expect. Encourage your child to think critically about what they see on their screens. Talk with them about:

• Ask your child to consider whether everything on the internet is accurate. Does your child know how to tell if a website is trustworthy?
• Help your child understand that media are made by humans with points of view. Explain that many types of technology collect data to send users ads or to make money.

No matter how smart or mature you feel your child is, monitor his or her screen use, and, as they get older, online, and social media behavior. Your child is bound to make mistakes using media. Talk to your child and help him or her learn from them. Remember to set a good example. Consider that your child is watching you for cues on when it’s OK to use screens and how to use them. With your babies, toddlers, and preschoolers you are just beginning to guide, manage and monitor their use of screens and media. This will only grow in importance as they grow. But by developing good habits and household rules — and revisiting them as your child grows — you can help ensure a safe experience.


Did you know? Autism Training Resources Available to You

AFIRM Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules

- Online training modules targeting 27 evidence-based practices (EBPs)
- Each module highlights developmental domains and aims that research has shown that EBPs are effective at addressing
- 9% of the EBPs include infant/toddler populations in their research.
- Designed for teach basics of EBPs concrete examples, video training, and progress monitoring data collection.
- Free resources provided - checklists, worksheets, diagrams, tip sheets, and parent guides.
- Free Certificate of Completion provided after post-assessments and exams are completed.
- OACs and CEUs Type of CEUs available - 25 for each module.

AIM Autism Internet Modules

- 5 free online training modules targeting understanding and support for individuals with ASD
- Includes 2 modules directed toward infant/toddler population
- Self-paced for individual learners or groups
- Includes pre- and post-assessments
- Discussion questions, activities, and resources for support
- Free but professional development certificates and graduate credits available

Help is in Your Hands

- 4 FREE online training modules for both parents and practitioners each containing 6 to 12 brief lessons.
- Strategies based on naturalistic approaches from Early Start Denver Model and Applied Behavior Analysis.
- Designed to help practitioners coach parents/ caregivers and improve behavior outcomes.
- Comprised of video lectures and interactive exercises from computer tablet, or smart phone.
- Focuses on increasing attention, increasing communication, and using social skills.
- Modules are available for parents or professionals.

Screen Time -Continued
**Ingredients:**

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup salt
- 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 2 cups lukewarm water
- 2 Tablespoons of vegetable oil (coconut oil works too)
- Food coloring, optional
- Quart sized bags

Stir together the flour, salt and cream of tartar in a large pot. Next add the water and oil. If you’re only making one color, add in the color now as well. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. Continue stirring until the dough has thickened and begins to form into a ball. Remove from heat and then place inside a gallon sized bag or onto wax paper. Allow to cool slightly and then knead until smooth. If you’re adding colors after, divide the dough into balls (for how many colors you want) and then add the dough into the quart sized bags. Start with about 5 drops of color (my favorite brands are listed above) and add more to brighten it. Knead the dough, while inside the bag so it doesn’t stain your hands. Once it’s all mixed together you’re ready to PLAY.