



Screen Time Is Not Forever

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We use screens
to say hello.



We use screens
to watch a show.

We use screens to read together.



But screen time
is not forever.



Tips for Caregivers and Parents

Screens are an integral part of modern life. So it can be confusing to hear that screen use may have negative effects on children when they're young and as they grow. Why are there warnings about young children and technology? How much screen use is too much? How do we unplug in a plugged-in world? Good questions!

Know the guidelines. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry suggest limiting screen use with toddlers because the early years are crucial to a child's physical, mental, social, and emotional growth. Toddlers learn more from *real* life—moving, exploring, touching, connecting—than they'll ever learn from a screen. This doesn't mean screens are “bad” or that you should never expose young children to them. *Screen Time Is Not Forever* isn't about making you feel guilty—the book is a tool in your teaching/parenting toolbox. *You* make the choices about screen use at home.

Aim for active viewing. Experts emphasize sitting with your child and watching *together*. You can then explain what's happening on-screen and make the experience interactive. Point out something funny, ask your child questions, and get up (together) to act out what you see. Interactive viewing encourages communication and movement. Of course, there will be times when you want to let your toddler watch alone so you can make a snack or have a moment to catch your breath during a busy day. Screen use is about balance, not hard-and-fast rules.

Be consistent. Toddlers thrive on routine. They need predictable meals and snacks, plenty of outdoor and play time, naps or rest during the day, and a regular bedtime. You can also make a screen routine to set your child up for success. To avoid techno tantrums, create a clear *start* and *stop*. Set a visual timer to help your child be ready when screen time is over. A few minutes before it ends, say, “Almost time to be done.”

Use familiar phrases to end screen time: “All done.” “Let's turn it off.” “Bye-bye screen.” “Screen time is done for now.” Make these phrases *positive*—say them with a smile and an energetic shift to something new.

American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations for Media Use

- For children younger than 18 months, avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting.
- For children ages 18–24 months, introduce small doses of high-quality programming that you watch together.
- For children ages 2–5 years, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programming and watch it with children to help them understand what they're seeing and apply it to the world around them.



Get moving. Follow up screen time with something physical and fun. This routine will help the child's body and brain make the transition. As you move, say, “It's fun to be done!” Have a favorite activity ready to go: Stretch together, or do some jumping jacks.

Set up screen-free zones. To help your child follow the limits you're setting, have screen-free areas at home and beyond. For example, no screens at mealtime or no screens when riding the bus. Avoid using screens in the bedroom and before bedtime—their lights stimulate the brain and make it harder for your child to fall asleep.

Be a “screen time is not forever” role model. As adults, it's easy to fall into screen-time habits we're barely aware of. We might keep a cell phone handy at all hours, check social media often, talk on the phone while the children play, turn on the TV for background noise, or stay on the computer longer than needed. When you need to use a screen, try using self-talk that your child will hear: “I'm texting Mommy to ask her to stop at the store.” “The weather app will tell me if it will rain today.” To help combat overuse of screens, try keeping a log of how much time you—and all members of the family—*truly* spend on a screen each day. If you decide it's too much, make a list of fun screens-off activities you can do instead. This could be your new family mantra: “Screen time is not forever . . . let's spend more time *together*.”



Screen Time Is Not Forever

Screen time is important for learning and can be helpful and fun, but it's also fun to be done! This active, encouraging book offers little ones enjoyable ways to spend their time without screens, such as jumping, running, singing, swinging, and playing pretend. Young children will learn that **“screens are for a little downtime, a not-too-long time,”** and what's important is spending time together.

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Recommendations for children's media use are based on guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

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