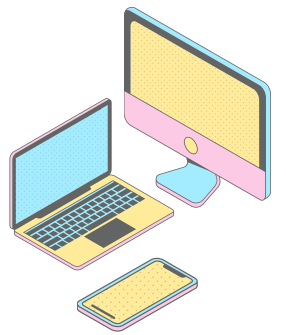


# Healthy Screen Use for Young Children



Screen time is the number of hours per day spent viewing TV/video, computer, electronic games, hand-held devices or other visual devices.



## Screen use in modern times

In the age of home-based learning, screens are pervasive in our children's lives. Screen use expectations need to be calibrated to account for this. Our recommendations are focused on control of **recreational screen time** outside the classroom.



## Impacts of Excessive Screen Use

### Behavioural

Excessive screen use, including background screen exposure, can lead to **'overstimulation'** of your child, or sensory overload.

This can lead to:

- Poor focus and attention span
- Decreased energy
- Challenging/difficult behaviour

### Myopia

Myopia can be aggravated by **higher screen use**. Take these steps against it!



Check for **signs of myopia**, such as:

- Squinting
- Holding screens/books very close to the face

### Developmental

Impaired **social and cognitive development**, due to:

- Less exposure to social cues
- Language delays and poorer language acquisition



Use the **20-20-20 rule**:

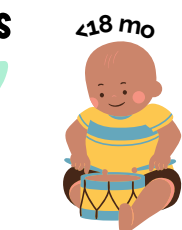
For every **20 minutes** spent using a screen,

Look away at an object that is **at least 20 feet (6m)** away.

For at least **20 seconds**

## Recommendations for Healthy Screen Use

The **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** recommends:



**<18 mo**  
No screen time except for video-calling



**18 mo to 2 yrs**  
No screen time except for video calling and co-viewing



**2 to <6 yrs**  
<1 hour of screen time/day

### Not all screen time is bad!

In the digital age, almost all learning and social interaction involves a screen. The key lies in achieving balance between different screen time types. Below are some tips on how to ensure healthy screen usage.

### Socialising

- When video calling, encourage visual and verbal communication.
- Watch shows that teach social reasoning.



#### Did you know?

Screen time should be of high quality, in order to be beneficial. To determine this, ask yourself:

- Is it **engaging** or **distracting**?
- Does it **actively encourage** your child to **explore more**?
- Can your child talk about what he/she sees?
- Is the content meaningful?

### Eating

Watching television when eating stops children from realising when they are full, which could result in overeating.

- Avoid screens during meals (including background TV).
- Put away your own devices as well, so as not to distract your child.



### Sleep

Screen based light increases alertness at night, and causes insomnia in children.



- Avoid screens within 1 hour of bedtime.
- Keep screen devices out of the bedroom, so as not to disrupt sleep.

### Physical Activity

With more screen use, children tend to spend less time on physical activity.

- Play screen-based games that encourage physical activity.
- Set aside time for your child to engage in non-digital exercise.

#### Did you know?

Muscle and bone strengthening exercises (e.g. skipping and hopping) are critical for physical development.



## Suggestions and Alternatives

Agree within the family and other caregivers what your child's **maximum daily screen time** should be and stick to it.



Explain to your child about your screen time limit and what consequences there would be if the limit is exceeded.

Expose your child to a **variety of activities**, both digital and non-digital (e.g. board games, arts & craft).



Play **cooperative games** with your child to teach teamwork skills, while also having some fun family-bonding time.

Where possible, **watch videos/shows with your child and discuss lessons learnt.**



**Set a good example amongst the adults in the household.** Limit your own screen time, especially when interacting with your child. Avoid watching or playing inappropriate content while children are present.

### Future considerations

It is important to **continue to ensure proper oversight of screen use** as your child enters primary school. For example, limit recreational screen time to <2 hours per day.

