

Help Your Family Use TV, Phones, and Tablets in Healthy Ways

As young kids get older, their interest in TV shows, movies, apps, and video games changes. You might wonder how much screen time is too much for kids age 3 to 8. You might also wonder how you can get anything done at home if you don't give them some screen time! These four tips can help you support your child's healthy development and make the best choices for your family.



Check out these 4 tips 

1

Balance screen use with other activities.

Aim for a healthy balance that includes time with family and friends, outside play and exercise, and plenty of sleep. Set family rules about when, how long, and where the family can watch television, use phones and tablets, or play video games. Let your children help define the rules for themselves (and for you!).

Ask yourself: What rules does my family have for television, phones, tablets, or video games? Are they interrupting family time, such as at meals or bedtime?

2

Choose shows, videos, or apps that match your child's age and interests.

Set household rules about what TV shows, movies, apps, or games the family can use. Use sites like Common Sense Media to find high-quality content. Look for shows or games that encourage children to actively think, create, or play along. Try to avoid content with loud sounds, flashing ads, or other distracting features.

Ask yourself: Does my child seem interested, or are they bored or frustrated? What are they learning from the TV show, video, or app?

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3

Make screen time social.

When your child is watching a TV show or video, or playing a video game, it's great to watch or play with them. It's important that time spent with screens doesn't replace time spent with a loving caregiver. If you can't watch with them, talk with your children about what they watched or played after the fact. Draw connections between what they saw on screen with experiences they have in the real world.

Ask yourself: When my young child is watching a TV show or video, or playing an app, is there a sibling or adult who can watch or play with them? What can I talk to my child about after they watch or play something?

4

Think about your own habits.

Research shows that having the television on in the background at home can lead to fewer interactions with your child. Try to keep the TV set off if no one is watching it, and silence your phone to reduce the distractions. Do your best to model self-control when it comes to your devices.

Ask yourself: Am I distracted by my phone or the TV when playing with my children? What are some adult "tech-free times" I can set for myself and for the family?