



What should I know about my child's media use?

- 1) Understand both the positive and negative aspects of media for your child's age.** Some positives are social connections with family and educational growth when using quality media at the right age. Some negatives of excessive media use are obesity risk, poor sleep, and cognitive, language, & behavioral lags. Young children need exploration and interactions with you for brain development, and screens cannot substitute. However, older children and teens can find positive elements of media that promote their development, and can learn how to avoid negative elements if you observe how they use the internet, encourage high-quality programs/apps (e.g., PBS, Sesame Workshop), and teach them to ask questions about their media as you watch with them. (Sources: [AAP](#), [Pediatrics](#), [JAMA Network](#))
- 2) Know what media to use freely and what media to use sparingly.** *Use freely:* video chats & PBS with family, skill-building apps (like Codecademy), music, podcasts, and audiobooks. *Use moderately:* interactive ebooks, movies/TV, and active videogames. *Use occasionally:* YouTube, first-person shooter videogames, and social media. *Use sparingly:* violent content, screens before bed & during mealtime, and background TV. (Source: [Wired](#))
- 3) Don't restrict all screen time except for infants.** While we don't recommend that you give your older child free reign over their screen time or internet use, don't enforce zero screen time either. Focus on how they interact with screens, not just how much they interact with them. For example, limiting screen time to a set # of hours per day is most effective if you talk and listen to your child about the plan, and when combined with other strategies such as not having children use screens shortly before bed. Also, share screen time with your child and talk with them about what they're seeing while watching or interacting with the screen. Look for positive elements of your child's screen time to help them find safe outlets for their media-based hobbies. (Sources: [AAP](#), [NPR's Life Kit](#))
- 4) Make sure your child has other activities to do in their spare time besides screen time.** Make sure your child isn't spending all their time on screens. Do they have something they could do with their free time if they didn't use screens for a day? Consider a sport or an after-school activity, or other creative options! (Source: [KidsHealth](#))
- 5) Pay attention to how your child acts during/after watching TV, playing video games, or hanging out online.** If they're using high-quality, age-appropriate media, exhibiting positive behavior, and their screen-time activities are balanced with plenty of healthy screen-free activities, there's no need to worry. (Source: [Common Sense Media](#))
- 6) Teach your children to ask questions about the media they see.** Teach your children to ask questions about the media they're viewing. *Who made this? Why did they make it? How do I know this is true?* This will teach them how advertising for junk food and other products target them, especially if they are Black/Hispanic, teach internet safety, and build social media smarts. (Sources: [JUS Media?](#), [National Assoc. for Media Literacy Ed.](#), [Rudd Center](#))
- 7) Know how your technology use—as a parent—influences parenting and your child's screen media use.** We now know that parents who use mobile devices when with their children interact less and respond more harshly to their children. Also, a parent's screen time is strongly associated with their child's screen time! (Source: [Quartz](#), [Erikson Institute](#))
- 8) Understand how apps keep you and your child coming "back" to them.** Apps use a variety of ways to keep people glued to their screens, including in-app purchases, "random" updating, notifications, and autoplay. Learn how to turn these settings off, or how to use them as you want! (Source: [Common Sense Media](#))
- 9) If you're concerned about heavy media use, create a media schedule that works for your whole family.** This can include weekly screen-time limits, limits on the kinds of screens children can use, and guidelines on the types of activities they can do. Make sure to get your child's or teen's input so that making and using the plan teaches them to understand their media and how to regulate their own media choices, and use this as an opportunity to discover what they like watching or to introduce new shows and apps for them to try. (Source: [AAP/HealthyChildren](#))
- 10) Do not believe every headline you see about screen media and your child.** Some headlines are based more on fears than on facts. For example, while many headlines say that screens are causing your teenager to be depressed and anxious, there is little evidence to support that claim. Instead, consult reputable websites with information and recommendations based on research, such as [Common Sense Media](#), which is an excellent resource for parents on children's screen time and media use (see Page 2). (Source: [NPR's Life Kit](#))

Sources

Common Sense Media blogs and resources

- commonsensemedia.org/screen-time
- commonsensemedia.org/screen-time/how-much-screen-time-is-ok-for-my-kids
- commonsensemedia.org/blog/the-sneaky-science-behind-your-kids-tech-obsessions

NPR resources

- [npr.org/2019/08/27/754362629/the-scientific-debate-over-teens-screens-and-mental-health](https://www.npr.org/2019/08/27/754362629/the-scientific-debate-over-teens-screens-and-mental-health)
- [npr.org/2019/06/20/734494867/the-brighter-side-of-screen-time](https://www.npr.org/2019/06/20/734494867/the-brighter-side-of-screen-time)
- [npr.org/2019/06/20/734532122/the-darker-side-of-screen-time](https://www.npr.org/2019/06/20/734532122/the-darker-side-of-screen-time)

Other websites and resources

- www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan
- namle.net/a-parents-guide
- kidshealth.org/en/parents/screentime-teens.html
- [wired.com/story/kids-screen-time-pyramid](https://www.wired.com/story/kids-screen-time-pyramid)
- <https://commercialfreechildhood.org/>
- qz.com/1674835/technology-is-interfering-with-the-parent-child-relationship
- <https://innovation.umn.edu/culture-and-family-life-lab/projects/jus-media-programme/>
- <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx>
- <http://uconnruddcenter.org/files/Pdfs/TargetedMarketingReport2019.pdf>



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