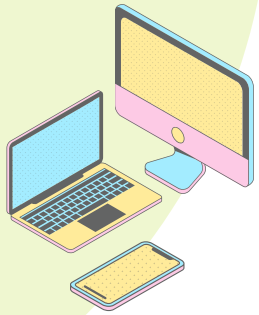
Screen time

can be described as 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 childrens' 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.



Future considerations

While this leaflet provides recommendations for screen use in children up to age 6, 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.

Suggestions & 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 violent and other inappropriate content while children are present.



Project Heads Up is a student-led initiative that aims to educate parents on how excessive screen time can affect child development,. We also aim to empower educators and parents with effective strategies to reduce their children's screen time.

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Impacts of Excessive Screen Use

Behavioural

Research has shown that 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, and challenging/difficult behaviour.

In children <5 years old, studies have shown that **>2 hours of screen time/day** is associated with **7.7x chance of being diagnosed with attention disorders** (e.g. ADHD).

Developmental



Excessive screen time at a young age has shown to impair social and cognitive development, due to:

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

Myopia

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

The prevalence of childhood myopia (short sightedness) in Singapore is among the highest in the world. **65% of our children** are **myopic by Primary 6**.

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

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



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 Usage

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



No screen time except for video-calling



No screen time except for video calling and co-viewing



<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! 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:

- Does it **actively encourage** your child to **explore more**?
- Is the content **meaningful**? (e.g. a positive message)
- Is it **engaging** or **distracting**?
- Can your child **talk about what he/she sees**?

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 running) are critical for physical development.