

SCREEN SENSE

Screen-Use Tips for Parents of Children Under Three

Build a media plan that's right for your family

Be aware of your child's media usage.

Limit screen time to ensure lots of "real world" play time. Young children learn more quickly and efficiently by exploring objects and interacting with people—teachers, caregivers, and ***you***.





Limit your own screen time when with your children. Cut down on distractions and interruptions by using your phone's "do not disturb" or silent setting during playtime or other one-on-one interactions with your child. Try to use phones, tablets, and laptops when your child is not with you.

Avoid background media. Turn off the television while children play or when no one is watching, and during daily routines like mealtime.





Take screens out of the bedroom. Screen time before bed makes it hard for children to fall, and stay, asleep. Instead, include stories, songs, and cuddles during bedtime.

Choose top-notch children's content. Public television stations and media outlets such as PBSkids.org or Sesame Workshop are trusted sources of high-quality programs. Websites like commonsensemedia.org also provide suggestions for quality children's media experiences. And local libraries frequently offer access to e-books, as does the International Children's Digital Library



Make media time "minds on" time.

Look for engaging apps, games, and e-books. The screen experience should focus a child's attention on a learning goal. Avoid apps with lots of "bells and whistles" that distract children from the educational content.





Choose interactive experiences. Look for media that ask a child to participate (give feedback or take an action) and that use strong story lines.

Help children connect what they see on a screen with real life. If a game on a tablet has a child moving a ball by dragging his finger, then roll, throw, and bounce balls in the real world. Point out and label objects that children have seen on screens, like animals or vehicles. Use the counting skills your child practiced online as you both count napkins to set the dinner table.





Use screens to help develop language skills. Share media experiences with your child to enhance learning. Ask questions. Talk about the story or characters in the game. Describe what you see on-screen.

Be creative during video chats. Use games such as peek-a-boo or hide-and-seek to have fun with video chat partners. You can also use puppets, dance to music, or share a snack or favorite story through the screen.



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