



Guidelines for screen time

How much screen time should my child have?

There are so many opinions on this topic, but it's important to point out that the evidence currently indicates that there is no "magic number" when establishing time limits. This can be very unsettling for parents/carers who are anxious to do the right thing. Alas, this is just another aspect of parenting that does not have an accompanying rule book!

It's no surprise that parents are often looking for advice on this topic when some opinions on the matter are highly emotive and make us question if we are doing the right thing by our children. Therefore, it's important that parents are using reputable sources of information to assist them when making decisions for their children. We have included some links at the end of this tip sheet.

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that as a society, we have needed to incorporate more technology into our lives. Many of us are now working, learning, socialising and even exercising at home with the assistance of technology. Once this pandemic is over, it's safe for us to assume that life will never quite be the same, and many of us may continue to use technology to a greater extent.

Does this mean that all of those limits you have set are useless now?

Perhaps we just need to think about the topic of screen time in a different way.

Digital Nutrition

Clinical Psychologist Jocelyn Brewer explains that it may be more helpful for us to consider the idea of 'digital nutrition' when trying to determine appropriate expectations and boundaries around screen time. This involves analysing the content or purpose of screen time before making judgements about time limits. She explains that just like foods, there may be apps and games that could be

considered 'superfoods' and these may be consumed more often. Alternately, some forms of technology are more like empty calories and may need limits.

Questions to consider

Once again, each individual has different needs, so it is not possible to prescribe a list of good vs bad games and apps. Rather, ask yourself the following questions to help aid your decision making.

Is the content developmentally appropriate (as opposed to age appropriate)?

What is the function of the game/app? Is it being used for:

- Relaxation
- Leisure and recreation
- a communication tool/aid
- daily living tasks – such as scheduling, prompts/reminders or 'gamified' ways to increase motivation to do tasks such as brush their teeth
- educational purposes
- therapeutic purposes
- socialisation (or even to avoid socialising)
- work and productivity
- health and wellbeing – such as mindfulness apps and exercise plans

Who are they connected to and are there safety precautions in place? Now more than ever, it's incredibly important to ensure our children and young people are safe online. For additional information about online safety, you can read [this document](#) from the eSafety Commissioner.

What thoughts, feelings and behaviours result from my child spending time on this app/game? Are they positive or unhelpful?

Once you have the above information, you can tailor your own rules and expectations around screen time.



Table Talk: all about apps

It's important that families talk and listen to each other about the way technology is being used. Parents and carers can set boundaries, but as children develop, these boundaries will change. Creating a family routine of talking about the fun, funny, weird, and worrying things we encounter online will help ensure children feel understood. Be interested in what they do online! Learn about their apps and why they love them. Also try to model attention: when they interrupt you on your device, stop and attend fully. This shows young people the behaviour we want to see more of.

Our favourite apps/games

The team at Asciak and Associates are incorporating these principles into our own daily lives as well as our client interventions. Below is a brief list of some of our own favourite uses of technology:

Mindfulness apps/programs

- Smiling Mind (free and Australian)
- The Headspace App

Apps for inclusive literacy (audiobooks)

- Audible
- Borrowbox

Apps related to Psychology

- ACT Companion
- Calm harm
- Beyond Now (suicide safety planning)
- YouTube clips to demonstrate key concepts

Leisure and recreation

- Goodreads
- Pinterest
- Spotify (for music and podcasts)
- We also love following our favourite authors, professionals and comedians on Facebook and Instagram

Visual aids

- Mouse timer

Want to know more?

If you have concerns about the way that you or your child is using technology, it may be helpful to speak to a Psychologist.

If you would like to review additional information about this topic, please consider the following sources:

The Office of the e-Safety Commissioner has wonderful resources to help navigate difficult topics such as screen time and online safety. Please visit their website for more information including family tip sheets and parent advice booklets.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

Jocelyn Brewer has some excellent tips on her website. She also runs training programs for parents on a range of related topics.

<https://digitalnutrition.com.au/>

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