



# Screen Time Tips for Children Aged 0 - 5

## Screen time definition and guidelines

Screen time is defined as time spent viewing a screen. Screens can include smartphones, tablets, TVs, video games, and computers.

**Recreational** screen time includes watching videos, playing games, and messaging friends. **Educational** screen time is related to learning.



## Current Canadian guidelines

- Children **younger than 2**: Screen time is not recommended
- Children **2-5 years old**: One hour or less of total screen time per day
- Children **6-12 years old**: Two hours or less of recreational screen time per day

## How Canadians are doing

- Canadian children of all ages spend more time online than recommended
  - 85% of children aged 3-4 years old exceed the current Canadian guidelines
  - 76% of children aged 5 and older exceed the current Canadian guidelines

## Benefits of reducing screen time

### Physical benefits

- Increased physical activity and lower obesity rates
- Healthier eating and less snacking on sugary foods

### Positive effects on mood and emotion

- Lower rates of depression are reported in children who have minimum screen time
- Fewer distractions and better relationships with loved ones

### Improved school performance

- Better vocabulary, numeric skills, and more engagement in the classroom

### Sleep

- Children sleep an average of 45 minutes longer on average without a device in their bedroom
- Longer sleep duration is associated with reduced fatigue and improved mood



For more detailed information, you can visit the [Canadian Paediatric Society Position Statement](#)





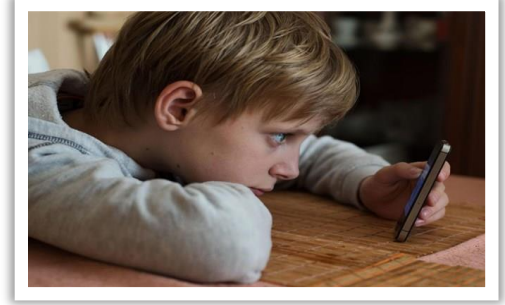
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## Healthy habits to implement

Establishing good habits early on can set your child up for lifelong success.

### Strategies may include:

- Screen-free time (at least one hour) before bed
- Not allowing screens at mealtimes and other family gatherings
- Not having TVs or other devices in the bedroom
- Turning off screens when no one is using them, especially background TV
- Being aware of screen usage in after-school childcare settings
  - Conversations with care providers can help avoid excess screen time at home
- Creating a **family media plan** according to the Canadian guidelines
  - Plan when, what, where, and how content can be watched
  - Choose one screen-free day per week i.e. “screen-free Saturday”



### How to be a positive screen time role model:

- Review your own habits and limit screen time for yourself
  - Taking a responsible approach to screen time sets a powerful example for your child
- If you get a text message or social media notification while talking to your child, wait until the conversation is over before you check it
- Place screen out of sight during personal conversations and while helping with homework

### Screen-free activities that your family may enjoy:

- Preparing meals and cooking together
- Family reading time: spend time reading aloud to your children
- Painting, colouring or drawing
- Listening to music/audiobooks or playing a musical instrument
- Playing outside or join a sports team
- **101 Screen-Free Activities**

### When your child does use a screen, some recommendations are to:

- Choose age-appropriate and educational content
  - A useful tool is the search bar on **Common Sense Media**
- Use fun videos that encourage movement, such as **yoga** or dancing
- Make it productive and interactive, by watching with your child and discussing the content afterwards



## Resources

- 1) **Live 5210**
- 2) **Decoda: Keeping Active Indoors**
- 3) **Zero to Three: Screen Sense**
- 4) **Healthy Kids, Healthy Future**
- 5) **Caring for Kids**
- 6) **NPR: What Experts Do With Their Children**



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