

## Digital Guidelines: Promoting Healthy Technology Use for Children



Today's children are growing up in a high-tech world. The parents have an important role to play in helping their children develop safe, healthy habits for technology use.

The current recommendations advise:

- For children under 18 months, avoid screen-based media except video chatting.
- For children 18 months to 24 months, parents should choose high-quality programming and watch with their children.
- For children 2 to 5, limit screen time to one hour per day of high-quality programming.
- For children 6 and up, establish consistent limits on the time spent using media, the types of media, the content of those media and the context in which they are using it.

Here are some pointers to keep in mind as you establish your own family guidelines for safe, satisfying technology use.

**Teach without overreact.** Like it or not, technology is an important part of our modern world. It won't help your child if you set overly restrictive limits or send the message that technology is something to fear. Instead, focus on teaching healthy habits that will stay with your child for a lifetime.

**Teach kids about technology from a young age.** Explain that tablets, computers and other media devices are not toys, and should be handled with care. Discuss with kids the many benefits of technology as well as the risks. Don't frighten them, but discuss the importance of respecting privacy and protecting personal information in age-appropriate ways. These conversations should be ongoing, and should become more detailed as your children get older.

**Use your judgment.** While screen-time limits are often a good idea, experts caution that parents shouldn't assume technology use is inherently harmful. Consider the context when establishing your family's rules for technology use. Video chatting with grandparents is different from playing a video game, for example. If you're entertaining your preschooler on a plane, the world won't end if she has a little extra screen time that day. If your son is doing research for a school paper, that computer time shouldn't necessarily count as his only screen time for the day.

**Protect bedtime.** Studies show that using digital media at night can interfere with sleep quality.<sup>2</sup> Consider restricting the use of phones, tablets and computers for at least 30 minutes before bed. Think twice about letting your child use those devices in his or her bedroom after lights out.

**Pay attention.** With younger kids, it's easy to see what they're doing online. As they get older, it's not so easy to look over their shoulder. Have open, honest discussions about what sites and type of content are off-limits. Do your research to understand the media your child is using, and check out your child's browser history to see what sites they visit. Explore software to filter or restrict access to content that's off-limits.

**Teach good online behavior.** Talk to you children about the importance of being respectful in their digital interactions. Encourage them to come to you if they witness cyberbullying or other troubling information online.

**Discuss digital decision-making.** It can be hard to discern whether some websites are reliable sources of information or not. Have conversations with your child about how to evaluate authenticity and accuracy online. Explain why they shouldn't download unfamiliar programs, click on suspicious links or share personal information on unknown apps or websites. Also teach your children not to respond to unsolicited messages from strangers — and to tell you if they get them.

**Foster real-life friendships.** Some kids who find it difficult to connect with peers spend more time online than playing with friends in real life. But digital friendships aren't a replacement for the real thing. Help your child develop social skills and nurture his or her real-life relationships. This is very important in this situation of social isolation. We must find the right balance



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**Learn more.** Technology changes quickly, and it can be hard to stay on top of all the apps and sites your children use.

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Fuente: *Digital Guidelines: Promoting Healthy Technology Use for Children* (APA-American Psychological Association)