



Common sense tips on how to manage infants' screen time to make sure they develop healthily and happily

For years, child development experts advised parents that children under the age of two should not have significant exposure to screens and electronic devices. This advice was rooted in the knowledge that very young children need the positive effects of real-world experiences, like a hug from a parent or a trip to the park.

But, in today's increasingly digital and screen-focused world, the prospect of keeping a child from spending any time looking at screens for two years is daunting, probably unrealistic and the thinking on whether it could do harm to your child has changed.

New guidelines suggest that the best way to handle screen use for young kids is a pragmatic approach based on the type of screen use and the needs of the individual child.

1. Set sensible limits

With babies and toddlers, it's important to structure and regulate screen time. Young children sleep through quite a lot of the day, so if you do allow some screen use it's crucial to make sure their waking hours aren't consumed by staring at screens.

2. Keep a balance

Setting limits on screen time is a great first step, but the way your young children spend the rest of their time will also be important. Babies and toddlers learn best through real world experiences, and as parents already know, they require lots of interaction and face-to-face attention. Make sure that young kids still get lots of chances to play, explore and interact in real life, away from screens.

3. Choose appropriate media

It may seem obvious, but if your toddler or young child is allowed to watch TV, the content should be appropriate for their age group. It's tempting to assume that very young children might not understand violent or inappropriate imagery, but [research has found](#) a correlation between exposure to violent and adult content and sleep problems in children aged between three and five. Even children's programming aimed at older kids might be too fast-paced or confusing for toddlers who may not yet understand silly plot lines or fantastical characters. If you allow very young children to watch TV, it should ideally be stuff that they can relate to, educational, and not too fast-paced.

4. Do digital things *together*

The more very young children interact with parents, carers and other loved ones, the better – and screen time is no exception. Skyping with other family members and watching a children’s TV show together while chatting about the plot are good examples of helping young children use screens in a productive way.

5. Try not to worry too much

Just as with any other aspect of parenting, it’s impossible to get everything absolutely perfect. In today’s digital world, it can be hard to prevent children from spending too much time around screens, or to make sure they’re only exposed to age-appropriate media. There are some important guidelines to keep in mind with young children and screen use, but don’t panic if you slip up occasionally.

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