



BRISBANE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Screen Time

Parent Information

Screen time – is it all bad?

New technologies have become integral to the lives of children today. At BGS, technology plays a vital role in educating boys – it stimulates discussion, promotes creativity and creates awareness in an effective learning context.

While technology is beneficial in a learning environment, too much screen time can have a potentially harmful effect.

The Australian Government's *Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Children* recommends that electronic media use for entertainment purposes be limited to a maximum of two hours a day for children aged 5 to 17 years old. Multiple studies reveal that Australian children are exceeding this recommended maximum. This puts boys at risk of serious physical and mental health consequences, with strong links presented between the time spent on screens, depression and poor cognitive development.

Studies show that limiting children's recreational screen time to less than two hours a day, alongside supporting them to get sufficient sleep and physical activity, improves cognition and maximises their learning. Research also suggests that the use of screens for school-related activities and assignments does not produce the same negative outcomes as recreational screen time.

What are the experts saying?

- The majority of Australian children are spending at least 3 hours using screen-based devices at home on a typical day, with an average of 4.6 hours on a weekday and 4.5 hours on a weekend day.¹
- Almost half (43%) of all children regularly use screen-based devices at bedtime and one in four (26%) of these children are reported to have sleep problems.¹
- Increased screen time is strongly associated with delayed bedtimes, fewer hours of sleep and poorer sleep quality.²
- Children who had less than two hours of recreational screen time each day, 9 to 11 hours of sleep and did at least one hour of physical activity performed better on tests of mental ability than those who did none of these. Screen time was the most significant factor in test results.³
- Screen time is linked to poorer connectivity in areas of the brain that govern language and cognitive control.⁴
- Teenagers who spend significant time on screens in the form of social media, internet, texting, and gaming thought about suicide a lot more than kids who did not.⁴
- Physical consequences of increased screen time include the impairment of motor development, obesity, type two diabetes and damaged eyesight.⁵

REFERENCES

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What can you do?

It is important to promote limited recreational screen time while prioritising healthy sleep routines and physical and social activities. As a parent, you can set guidelines to limit your son's screen time to a reasonable amount. Practical strategies that you can employ at home to set boundaries and support your son's wellbeing include:

- Have a conversation with your son about his screen time.
 - What is he using screen time for?
 - Could he be using it for more beneficial purposes?
- Check in with your son regularly about his wellbeing.
 - Could any changes in his wellbeing be attributed to his use of screen time?
 - If yes, does he have any ideas on how to change this? How could he implement these changes effectively?
- Encourage face-to-face social activities rather than digital socialisation.
- Model good device behaviour for your son (e.g. limit your own digital usage at home and don't bring your phone to the dining table).
- Educate your son about appropriate digital usage habits, prioritising other activities and self-managing his screen time.
- Limit time spent on devices each night (e.g. no screen time after dinner or time you deem reasonable).
- Avoid smartphone use at night and avoid use in the bedroom (phones in bedrooms have been shown to contribute to poor sleep habits).
- Encourage your son to take regular breaks when using his devices. If necessary and after discussing this with your son, install applications on his devices that allow you to control or monitor his usage.