

How to set limits on screen time



Setting rules around screen time is never easy, but since the beginning of the pandemic, it might feel impossible for some parents. There's no one right way when it comes to controlling screen time, however there are some strategies to help you set reasonable expectations. Before doing so, it is recommended that parents use a “*developmental checklist*” to consider whether a child is engaged in activities important for healthy development, ask yourself:

- *Is my child sleeping enough and eating a somewhat balanced diet?*
- *Are they getting some form of exercise every day?*
- *Are they spending some quality time with family?*
- *Do they keep in touch with friends?*
- *Are they invested in school and keeping up with homework?*
- *Do they spend time on the hobbies and extracurriculars that matter to them?*

Set reasonable limits

After reflecting on the “*developmental checklist*”, you can decide whether you need to set new limits to your child's screen time. However, these rules don't necessarily have to be strict to be useful. Try these strategies to set healthy limits, as well as avoiding conflicts:

Start with sympathy. It is important that they know that you understand their needs regarding screen time and how it is a way to reduce stress for everyone.

extra 10 minutes of screen time for the following day. It is also recommended to write such agreements and place them somewhere visible (e.g. fridge)

Offer extra screen time as a reward. Suggest additional screen time as a motivation for good behavior. For example, getting ready for school on time without complaining will earn them an

Offer alternatives. When asking kids to stop doing something, it is important to offer alternatives. For instance, creating an “activity menu” with a list of non-screen activities will allow your child

to switch from screen activity to another without conflicts.

Keep a schedule. It is also recommended to create a schedule with your child where you agree on screen time. For example, 1 hour after the

homework is finished for screen time. This allows the kids to know what to expect, accordingly their requests for screen time will be reduced.

Staying consistent

After setting structure regarding screen time, you might find your children fighting against it. It is natural for kids to test new limits to see if they are consistent, which might make them quite irritated for the first few days. However, this pushback is most likely to fade away as they get used to these new rules. Accordingly, avoid as much as you can making exceptions to the rules the first couple of weeks. Here are few strategies to pass through this resistant phase:

Don't argue. When it comes to screen time, reasoned arguments and careful rationales aren't likely to matter much to kids. Once it's set, it's not up for discussion.

Reassess. As kids get older, it is recommended to modify the rules and compromise based on their wants with the agreement that you'll start with a trial.

Choose the right time. Finding the appropriate time to implement new rules is important; in fact, starting at the beginning of the week would be less challenging than mid week.

References

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