

Bonus Skill 1

Bonus 1.1: Kids and Screens

Most children struggle to limit screens. Children with attention or behavior problems struggle more. Why?

- Screens provide easy brain stimulation (“instant gratification”)
- Child may struggle with friendships, prefer to play alone
- Parents may use screens to help disruptive child be calm and quiet
- Child may resist or misbehave when parents try to set screen limits
- Child’s behavior can get in the way of doing other activities, like group sports

[Watch Video](#)



Screens can make behavior worse

- Screens on in the background disrupt family communication and make child behavior worse
- Screens near bedtime affect sleep
- Violent content affects self-control and can worsen aggression
- When screen time is over, there is a “dopamine crash” (brain chemistry change) and meltdown

Signs of a Screen Use Problem

- Tantrums when screens taken away
- Chooses screens over friends
- Gets less sleep because of screens
- Sneaks screens at night
- Needs a screen to calm down
- Few interests besides screens

Screen Use Guidelines by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Until age 5: Under 1 hour/day of high-quality media
- Age 6+: 1-2 hours/day of high-quality media
- Close parent monitoring or watch together
- No violent content
- Choose “screen-free” zones and times of day



Key Recommendations

- Childhood is the time to develop healthy screen use habits. You will thank yourself later (when your child is a teen) for making changes now.
- Taking away all screens is not reasonable for most families
- Set “screen-free” zones and times. Screens should not be in kids’ bedrooms.
- Have a predictable screen schedule, and be clear and consistent with how and when your child can earn and use screen time
- Set rewards for following screen time rules; consequences for breaking them

Bonus 1.2. Creating a Family Media Plan

Use this worksheet to create screen boundaries for your home. If this feels like too much change at once, pick just one limit on this form to start with this week. *Create your family's personalized Family Media Plan at www.healthychildren.org*

What are “screen-free” zones in your house?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dining table/kitchen counter | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kids' bedrooms | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Car | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen | |

What are “screen-free” times of the day?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Before school | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mealtimes | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Until homework and chores are done | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Between dinner and bedtime | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If guests are visiting | |

Other Screen Limits

When will kids end screens each day? _____

What is your time limit for child screens on..... Weekdays: _____ Weekends: _____

Where will screens be kept overnight? _____

What's the reward if kids follow screen rules? _____

Idea: Add 10 extra min of screens the next day

What is the consequence if child won't turn off screen? _____

Ideas: Lose 15 min of screens the next day, or that device is off limits the next day

How will adults monitor and model their own screen limits?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off the TV and screens if no one is actively using them | <input type="checkbox"/> No phones during meals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Put phone away from after school until kids' bedtime | <input type="checkbox"/> App use tracking: keep certain apps to under _____ per day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep phone out of sight if not using | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

Bonus 1.3: Screen Time Tips and Tricks

What if...

My child won't hand over their screen when I ask?

- Check whether your expectation is realistic. What kind of warning would you appreciate in their situation?
 - When calm, discuss your expectations for ending screens
 - Give a warning with time to save what they are doing
 - Put a fun activity right after screen time. Don't ask them to go from screens to chores, homework or bedtime.
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My child won't get off the screen to go to sleep?

- We recommend keeping all screens out of kids' rooms
 - Create a family screen curfew and set a reminder alarm
 - Caregivers may need to keep all screens in their room to avoid kids sneaking screens at night
 - Remind your child of the screen privileges they get for following screen rules
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I can't keep track of my child's screen time?

- Make a list of all tasks your child must do between school time and getting screens. If your child asks for screens, confirm that they have done everything on their list
 - Focus on screen-free places at home and times of day rather than a screen time limit.
 - Be sure to keep a screen curfew in place at night
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My child has a meltdown when we turn off screens?

- Again, transition from screens to another engaging activity, like family or play time instead of a "boring" task
 - Set a reward for turning off the screen calmly, such as bonus screen time the next day
 - Discuss how to handle the meltdown – will you ignore? Will they lose a privilege if they break a rule?
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I need to keep better track of my child's screen activities?

- Let technology be your friend! Use free screen control apps and tools to limit child (and your!) screen use:
 - Ages 4-7: Under "Settings" on your device, set "Parent Controls" or "Screen Time" limits on favorite apps
 - Ages 8-12: Use controls on the device, your wifi network, or screen monitor apps such as Bark, Mspy, or Qustodio
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