

Managing Screen Time

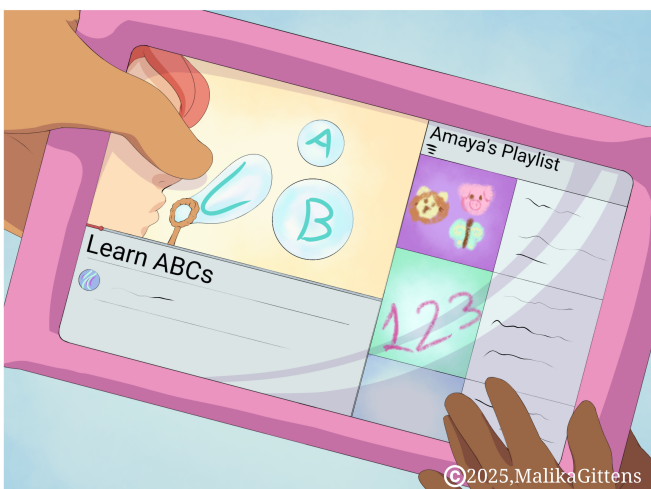
As the use of electronic devices and media becomes more commonplace in our world, children are exposed to screens at earlier and earlier ages. It is important for parents to understand the effects of digital media and electronic device use, and to set appropriate boundaries from inception. Excessive screen time and exposure to poor quality content has been linked to several problems in childhood such as obesity, problems with sleep, poor learning, inattention and difficulty focusing, aggression and delays in the development of language and social skills.

Setting Limits & Age-appropriate Content

Infants

Before the age of 2 years, children learn better by interacting with caregivers, siblings and peers than they do from consuming digital media. Experts discourage the use of electronic devices by children younger than 18 months, except for the purpose of video chatting with a caregiver who is away. If electronic devices are introduced between 18 -24 months, the infant should not be using the device alone or unassisted, and media must be of high quality both in content and resolution graphics.

Preschoolers



Between age 2 - 5 years, children may benefit from high-quality programming, but this should be limited to a maximum of one hour per day. This exposure should always be supervised by a trusted caregiver who watches the content with the child, who can see what the child sees, gauge how well they understand what they are seeing and hearing, and instruct the child on how this applies to the real life context. Children should be taught to apply the same principles and values to online or

virtual contexts that parents value in real world contexts. As a parent, you may want to preview content,

and use parental controls to prevent unwanted advertisements or media from popping up. If this cannot be avoided, explaining the role of advertisements to your child in age appropriate language is important. Try to ensure engaging, interactive content of high educational value, as opposed to passive screen time.

Older Children



For older children, it is important to set limits on time as well. Times and places where devices are not acceptable should be created and maintained. Devices may be restricted during mealtimes, meditation or religious activities, or after bedtime. You may consider requiring your child to charge their phone outside of their bedroom. Whatever you choose, it is important to remember that the quality of content is more important than the time, and as a parent it is essential to know what a child is exposed to on an electronic device. Leading by example and spending some time 'unplugged' is also important for parents.

