Balancing screen time

Top tips to support children in Early Years (0-5)

A balance use of screens can offer children key benefits to help them to learn, explore and interact with the world around them.

Get simple tips to put balance and purpose behind screen time to help young children benefit from their screen use.

How are children using screens?

36%
play games online for nearly 6 hours a week

69%
use tablets to go online

8 out of 10
of 3-4s who use YouTube to watch cartoons and funny videos

52%
are online almost 9 hours a week

What parents tell us

Screens' impact on physical wellbeing

Over a third of parents are worried children are not getting enough time to play outside because of screen time.

Screens are good for creativity

Nearly 7 out of 10 parents believe that using devices gives children another way of being creative for example a child who enjoys dancing, sharing a new routine online with family and friends.

What are the benefits and challenges of screen use?

Screen time benefits

- Screen use provides a range of opportunities for creativity and learning – **70% of parents strongly agree that using devices is essential for their child's development.** Source: *Internet Matters Look both ways report*

- Screens can be a great tool to **allow children to maintain relationships** with family and friends.

- **Screens can help ease the financial burden** when looking to entertain children

Screen time challenges

- Young children might **stumble across inappropriate content** that may have a negative impact on their digital wellbeing

- Long periods of passive screen time **could have a physical effect on their development** (i.e. eyes, brain), sleep cycle and behaviour.

- Younger children **may not understand the concept of what the internet** is and how it works so could find it hard to differentiate between what is real and what is fake.

5 top tips to balance screen time

1. Set rules on the use of screens in and out of the home

Create a family agreement together to manage expectations of how screens and online platforms should be used and why.

Set rules to meet the needs of each child based on their use, interest and engagement of screens and **consider how screen time can complement** what they do offline.

Make sure to stick to the rules and model the behaviour you'd like to follow to make it a success. It's a good idea to review the rules as children grow and become more active online.

For younger children, it's important to **prioritise face-to-face interactions and apps that encourage active play** to support their development of language and other skills

2. Make family time and sleep a priority over screens

By creating **device free zones at meal times** and around the home and making use of tools to set limits on when screens can be used, you can improve family interactions and reduce interruptions to children's bedtime routine.

Experts recommend switching off screens **at least an hour before bedtime** to give young children time to wind down

3. Play, watch and discover together

As young children take their first digital footsteps, **play, watch and discover together to stay engaged** in what they are doing and create spaces to talk about what they enjoy and how to stay safe.

This will help them feel more confident to come to you if they get stuck or see something that makes them feel uncomfortable. It's also important to **stay calm and not overreact** when children tell you what has gone wrong

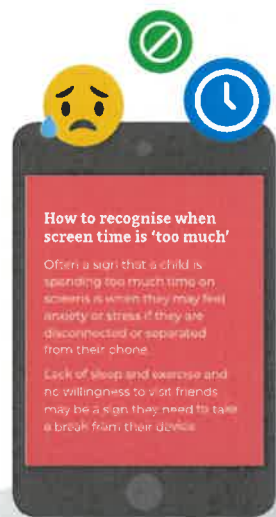**4. Take the lead when choosing what they see and do on screens**

Together find age-appropriate apps, websites and games that will give your child a way to explore their passions, enhance their skills while building their confidence in navigating the online world.

Be sure to make use of free tech tools on the apps and devices they use to create a safer space for them to explore online.

Tools like Apple's Screen time and Google's Digital Wellbeing dashboard can **give you an overview of what they are spending their time on** which you can use as a starting point to talk about ways to improve their screen use and protect their digital wellbeing

5. Set a good example with your own screen use

Children will tend to model their behaviour on you, so if you **encourage them to take breaks** when on screen or leave devices out of the bedroom at night, they will follow your lead.

How to recognise when screen time is 'too much'

Often a sign that a child is spending too much time on screens is when they may feel anxiety or stress if they are disconnected or separated from their phone.

Lack of sleep and exercise and no willingness to visit friends may be a sign they need to take a break from their device.

The truth about screen time

Not all screen time is created equal so it's important to encourage children to have a healthy balance between passive screen time (i.e. watching YouTube) and interactive screen time (i.e. creating content or playing games online)

There is no safe level of screen time but it doesn't mean that all screen time is harmful. Lack of evidence has meant that experts have found is hard to recommend a cut-off for children screen time overall

One size does not fit all when it comes to screen time – it's more about getting it right for your families needs

Balancing screen time
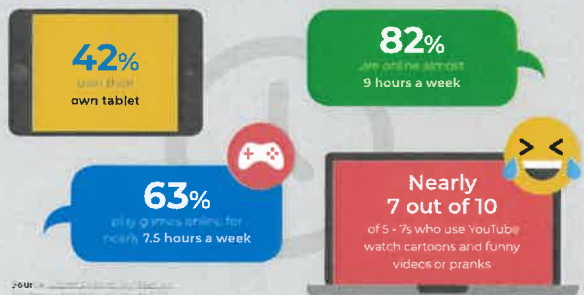
Top tips to support children 5-7 (Key stage 1)

As screens become a bigger part of young children's lives at home and at school, it's important to put balance and purpose behind screen time to help them develop key skills and benefit from their screen use. Find tips and advice to help them do just that.

How are children using screens?

42%
own their own tablet

82%
are online almost 9 hours a week

63%
play games online for nearly 7.5 hours a week

Nearly 7 out of 10
of 5 - 7s who use YouTube watch cartoons and funny videos or pranks

Source:

What do parents say about screen time?

Screens are good for creativity

Nearly 7 out of 10 parents believe that using devices gives children another way of being creative for example a child who enjoys dancing, sharing a new routine online with family and friends.

Screens can displace family and homework time

Even at this relatively young age, almost 3 out of every 10 parents say screen time means they have to fight for their child's attention and over a quarter (26%) say it has an impact on completing homework.

What are the benefits and challenges of screen use?

Screen time benefits

- Screen use provides a range of opportunities for creativity and learning – **70% of parents strongly agree that using devices is essential** for their child's development. Source: *Internet Matters Look both ways report.*

- Screens can be a great tool to allow children to maintain **relationships** with family and friends.

- **Screens can help ease the financial burden** when looking to entertain children.

Screen time challenges

- Young children might stumble **across inappropriate content** that may have a negative impact on their digital wellbeing.

- Passive screen time **could have a physical effect on their development** (i.e. eyes, brain, sleep cycle and behaviour.

- Younger children **may not understand the concept of what the internet is** and how it works so could find it hard to differentiate between what is real and what is fake.

5 top tips to balance screen time

1 Set digital rules together

Agree digital boundaries together with your child to get them involved in the process and build up their understanding of why it's beneficial for them to stick to them.

Choosing device free zones in the home, keeping phones out of the bedroom at night and using free tools to turn devices on and off at different times of the day are just some ways to help children strike a healthy balance between activities on and offline.

Also, it's a good idea to encourage them to take a break every 30 minutes and use screens in short bursts. Experts recommend turning screens off an hour before bedtime to give children time to wind down.

2 Stay engaged in their screen use

Get engaged and stay engaged in their digital life as they grow. The more you get involved and understand the things your children do online, the easier it is to gain their respect and influence what they do in their digital world.

Ensure they have a healthy mix of screen activities that encourage creativity, learning & education, connecting with family & friends as well as using devices for downtime.

3 Discuss online risks and strategies to tackle them

Take time to **help them understand the risks and benefits of using the internet,** whether it be discussing what steps to take if they see something that upsets them or guiding them towards apps and platforms that will help them explore their passions and enhance their skills.
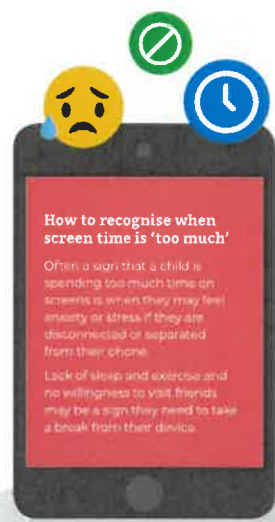
4 Set a good example with your own screen use

Children will tend to model their behaviour on you, so if you encourage them to take breaks when on screens or leave phones out of the bedroom at night, they will follow your lead.

5 Use tech tools to manage their time & access to media

Whatever device your child uses, **be sure to make use of free and premium tools available** to manage their access to age-appropriate content and review the time they spend on specific online activities.

How to recognise when screen time is 'too much'

Often a sign that a child is spending too much time on screens is when they may feel anxiety or stress if they are disconnected or separated from their phone.

Lack of sleep and exercise and no willingness to visit friends may be a sign they need to take a break from their device.

The truth about screen time

Not all screen time is created equal so it's important to encourage children to have a healthy balance between passive screen time i.e. watching YouTube and interactive screen time i.e. creating content or playing games online.

There is no safe level of screen time but it doesn't mean that all screen time is harmful. Lack of evidence has meant that experts have found it hard to recommend a cut-off for children's screen time overall.

One size does not fit all when it comes to screen time – it's more about getting it right for your family's needs.

Balancing screen time

Top tips to support children aged 7-11 (Key stage 2)

Typically at this age children will start to be more active online so it's important to equip them with the tools to strike a healthy balance between the time they spend on and offline, especially as they start to get their own devices.

How are children using screens?

35%
own a **smartphone**

93%
are online almost 13.5 hours a week

74%
play games online for nearly 10 hours a week

Nearly 8 out of 10
of 8-11s use YouTube to watch cartoons, funny videos and music videos

What parents tell us

Screens are good for creativity

Nearly 7 out of 10 parents believe that using devices gives children another way of being creative for example a child who enjoys dancing, sharing a new routine online with family and friends.

Screens' impact on physical wellbeing

Nearly half of parents in the UK are worried their children are spending too much time online – with the majority believing it is causing their kids to lead a sedentary lifestyle lacking in physical exercise.

What are the benefits and challenges of screen use?

Screen time benefits

- Screen use provides a range of opportunities for creativity and learning – **70% of parents strongly agree that using devices is essential** for their child's development.
  Source: Internet Matters Look both ways report

- Screens can be a great tool to allow children to **maintain relationships** with family and friends.

- **Screens can provide much needed down-time** at the end of the school day.

Screen time challenges

- **Peer pressure from friends to stay online** and the way certain platforms are developed to keep users engaged can make it harder for children to switch off.

- As children get more active online there is an **increased risk that they might stumble across inappropriate content** that can have a negative impact on their digital wellbeing.

- Long periods of passive screen time (i.e. bingeing on box sets) **could have a physical effect on their development** i.e. eyes, brain, sleep cycle and behaviour.

5 top tips to balance screen time

1 Create screen time rules together

To help them stick to digital boundaries **get them involved in the process of setting simple rules** on how they should use screens in and out of the home.

Giving them reasons why it's important to prioritise sleep, homework and family time can help them make smarter choices about when and how they should switch off screens.

Make sure to model the behaviour that you'd like to see in them – children tend to do what you do, not necessarily what you say.

2 Take an active role in their digital life

Get engaged and stay engaged in their digital life as they grow. The more you get involved and understand the things your children do online, the easier it is to gain their respect and influence what they do in their digital world.

Making screens part of family time, like a movie or an online games night is one way to make it more inclusive and engaging.

Also, encouraging them to have a healthy mix of screen activities that encourage creativity, learning & education, connecting with family & friends, as well as using devices for downtime is important.

3 Equip them with know-how to manage risks online

As children become more active online, **have regular conversations with them about ways to deal with a range of risks** that they may be exposed to such as seeing inappropriate content or being cyberbullied.

Make sure they know when and where to seek help if they need it and what tools they can use to deal with it.

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4 Use tools to manage their screen time & access to media

Whatever device your child uses, be sure to **make use of free and premium tools available** to manage their access to age-appropriate content and review the time they spend on specific online activities.

5 Encourage them to be selective about what they do online

Help them avoid mindless scrolling and be more critical about the media they watch and the platforms they use. Encourage them to explore apps and websites that will compliment what they enjoy in the real world and develop their key skills.

How to recognise when screen time is 'too much'

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STARS APP: A PARENT'S GUIDE

Understanding the messaging app for kids

What is the Stars App?

Stars is a messaging app designed specifically for children. It aims to provide a safe and fun environment for kids to connect with friends and family. Features include:

- **Direct Messaging:** Kids can send text, photos, and videos to contacts.
- **Group Chats:** Allows kids to participate in group conversations.
- **Fun Filters & Effects:** Offers various filters and effects to enhance communication.
- **Parental Controls:** Provides tools for parents to monitor and manage their child's activity.

The Good ✨

- **Safe Communication:** Offers a monitored platform for kids to communicate.
- **Creative Expression:** Filters and effects encourage creativity.
- **Parental Involvement:** Allows parents to stay informed and set boundaries.

Stars App provides a controlled environment that can be safer than traditional messaging apps. The parental control features give you the ability to oversee who your child is talking to and what they are sharing. The app's creative tools can also help children express themselves and stay connected with loved ones in a fun and engaging way.

The Not-So-Good 😕

- **Cyberbullying Risk:** While moderated, it's not immune to bullying.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Data collection practices are a factor to consider.
- **Addictive Potential:** Like any app, it can be time-consuming.

Even with moderation, the risk of cyberbullying still exists. It's important to discuss online safety with your child and teach them how to handle uncomfortable situations. Also, be aware of the app's data collection practices and privacy policies. Like all digital platforms, the Stars App can be addictive, so setting time limits is crucial for a healthy balance.

Tips for Parents 💡

- **Set Clear Rules:** Establish guidelines for app usage, including time limits and appropriate content.
- **Regularly Monitor Activity:** Use parental controls to stay informed about your child's interactions.
- **Talk to Your Child:** Discuss online safety, cyberbullying, and responsible communication.
- **Review Privacy Settings:** Understand and adjust the app's privacy settings to protect your child's data.
- **Keep the Conversation Open:** Encourage your child to come to you with any concerns or issues they encounter on the app.

In Conclusion

The Stars App can be a valuable tool for kids to connect with friends and family in a controlled environment. By understanding both the positive and negative aspects, and by taking proactive steps to ensure your child's safety, you can help them have a positive and secure experience on the app.