Balancing Screen Time and Physical Activity

By learning to use media appropriately and learning to incorporate physical activity into daily life, kids can be more prepared for our challenging world. The challenge is using screen time and physical activity to help them. Just like the other tasks of this stage in child development, media skills and physical activity also need to be learned.

Is There Such a Thing as Good Screen Time?

It is hard to label something as purely good or purely bad. Technology and screens can link us across the miles, take education into many hard-to-reach places, make education fun, provide entertainment, and even help to provide medical care. Overuse of screens can interrupt sleep, take away time for physical activity, expose kids to persuasive advertising, make us crave unhealthy foods, and allow unhealthy relationships to thrive. Moderation is key!

Reframe the way you think about screen time. Instead of worrying about trying to constantly deny screen time, decide when screen time is OK. Rather than saying, “Put down that tablet!,” try “Remember, you can use that tablet in the car.”

Good uses for screen time:

- Family movie night
- Learning for fun
- Video player for long drives

What’s the deal with sleep and screens?

Our sleep cycle is controlled by a part of the brain that responds to sunlight, which is rich in blue light. Blue light tells us when it is day and when it is night. Screens are also rich in blue light, signaling to the brain “Hey, it’s midday! Time to be awake!” We know adequate sleep is important for school performance, appetite, behavior, and a variety of other health concerns. For these reasons, screens should be turned off at least one hour before bedtime.

Sometimes Screen Time Is The Only Thing That Allows Me to Get Anything Done!

This is true for a lot of parents, and the “instant babysitter” effect is one of the things parents cite most often as a source of excessive screen time and, unfortunately, parental guilt. First off, get out of the guilt game! Parenting is busy and stressful. When you need to do an important task, screen time can provide a valuable break.

“Two hours of screen time? Are you kidding me? That’s done by noon!” Specific limits sometimes ignore the details about what that screen time actually is. If we are in the middle of a pandemic or a blizzard, screen time may be school. In general, limits are about recreational screen time like video games and entertainment. Think more about reducing from where you are. If you can reduce 30 minutes per day from wherever your starting point is, that is a win!

Resource

The American Academy of Pediatrics has a great resource for parents called The Media Use Plan that can help busy parents create a workable and effective plan for dealing with screens and activity. [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx#wizard](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx#wizard)
FOR CHILDREN

Screen Time and Activity in Preschool and Kindergarten

What Can I Do Instead of Screen Time?
Activity is a personal decision. Some families love to garden, others love to play, while others love to participate in friendly competition. What do you love to do?

- **BECOME A PARK HIKER** - Get outside; learn about nature; get dirty; get to know Ohio, our beautiful state, in all its rocky, muddy, snowy, colorful beauty.

- **USE THE LIBRARY** - Ohio has amazing libraries that do way more than loan out books.

- **SWIM SAFELY** - Learning to swim not only makes lakes and pools fun, it makes kids much safer around water.

- **LEARN SOMETHING NEW** - Try music, a foreign language, dance, martial arts, or sewing. It’s fun to learn alone and with your family!

Ohio is a beautiful state.

Build a fort in 4 simple steps:
1. Grab 2 or 3 of your coziest blankets.
2. Create the top of your fort with one of the blankets using furniture around the house (with the help of a caregiver).
3. Create the back of your fort with the second blanket by resting it on top of the first blanket.
4. Throw your favorite pillows, snacks, and toys inside the fort.

Now you have the perfect hideaway!

Create your own scavenger hunt!

**Ohio AAP PMP Mobile App**
Search Parenting at Meal and Playtime on Apple Store or Google Play

App Highlights...
- Physician-endorsed materials for parents to access on-demand
- Resources for parents organized by age
- Text reminders sent monthly and/or for age milestones
- Easy sign-up
- Videos on feeding, play, nutrition and more

Ohio AAP PMP Mobile App

Ohio Department of Health