

Start Well Early Years Communication and Language Development Service

Screen time guidance

Finding the right balance with screen time can be difficult, especially when your child wants to watch the television, play a game on your phone or you want five minutes peace. Technology has many advantages - however it is important we find a balance with our children.

Did you know your child wants to hear your voice and interact with you more than anything else? During play time, switch off the TV and put away mobile phones so that there are no distractions.

Screen media cannot replace real life activities, such as: reading with your child; talking about their day; playing games and encouraging imaginative play such as dressing up as their favourite character or having tea parties. Children *love* being active and creative!

Children usually model their behaviour on others; it might help to think about the amount of screen time your child is exposed to or sees others using.

Setting time limits can help, as routine makes our children feel safe and secure. It is important you are consistent, so your child does not get mixed messages.



Strategies to support language development

These guidelines are for all children under the age of 5 years

Children under 2 years - Screen time is not recommended

Babies love to hear your voice and interact with you more than anything else. If you choose to use screen time, why not put some music on and sing along or dance together? Make it interactive, your baby will *love* spending this quality time with you!

Children 2+ years of age - Screen time should be no more than 1 hour; less is better

Interacting with others is what children prefer more than anything else. If you choose to use screen time, why not interact with family, grandparents, or friends through video calling? You could make it fun by singing your child's favourite song or talking about what your child has been doing.

Guidance states that you should not use any technology for at least an hour before going to bed. Enjoy some time reading a book before bedtime instead.

Reference: World Health Organization. (2019). *Guidelines on Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour and Sleep for Children Under 5 Years of Age*. Available: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/guidelines-on-physical-activity-sedentary-behaviour-and-sleep-for-children-under-5-years-of-age> Last accessed: 5th April 2022

