Media and Screen Time Tips for Families

Manage screen time by age. Children less than 2 years old, minimal to no screen time. Children ages 2-5, approximately 1 hour. Children 6+, amount based on balanced lifestyle choices; physical activity, sleep, non-media activities.

Don't make screens *the* reward (or consequence). Technology is very appealing to kids as it is, but when we make screen time the go-to thing kids get for good behavior — or get taken away for bad behavior — we are making it even more desirable, thereby increasing the chances that a child will overvalue it.

Be selective in what you allow. Often the age recommendations on apps, games or videos are just a guess and not a match for your child's development level. You know what your child can/cannot handle.

Reduce screen use before bedtime. Kids need sleep (between 8-12 hours a night depending on age), screens do not support the "winding down" process needed before bed. Cut off screen time 1 hour prior to bedtime, use night-mode or "guided access" to control what is accessible.

Turn off the TV if no one is watching it. Background TV noise can expose kids to age inappropriate content.

Set Limits. Practice what you preach and balance media and non-media activities. Playing outside, reading, chores, homework, board games are all great ways to connect without technology.

Don't use technology as an emotional pacifier. Media can be very effective in keeping kids calm and quiet, but it should not be the only way they learn to calm down. Children need to be taught how to identify and handle strong emotions, come up with activities to manage boredom, or calm down through breathing, talking about ways to solve the problem, and finding other strategies for channeling emotions.

Pre-teen/teens Warn children about the importance of privacy and the dangers of texting/sexting. Teens need to know that once content is shared with others, they will not be able to delete or remove it completely, including texting of inappropriate pictures. They may also not know about or choose not to use privacy settings, and they need to be warned that sex offenders often use social networking, chat rooms, e-mail, and online gaming to contact and exploit children.

App, movie and website review.
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