

Screen Time Guidance

During this period of isolation, many children and adults are likely to be spending more time using screens than they are used to. Adjusting to working from home and juggling work with childcare and home learning are difficult and many people are concerned about screen time for their children. Here are some guidelines to consider to help manage your family's screen time.

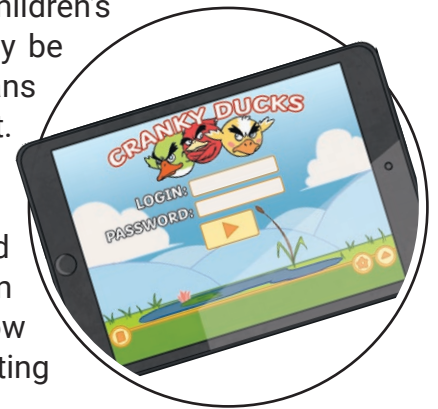


Consider Timing

Think about when screen time is most useful - maybe your children can do online learning activities at times when you need to be in a meeting or complete some work. Screen time immediately before bedtime is believed to have a negative impact on sleep so putting all screens away before dinner, to allow time to rest and prepare for sleep, is a good idea.

Look for Interactivity

Screen time doesn't have to be passive. There are many interactive and educational games and activities available, including maths videos and games, spelling and phonics activities and educational television programmes. All of these will help to support children's learning while also keeping them entertained. Children may already be familiar with these activities, as they are used in schools, which means they can do many of them independently without the help of an adult.

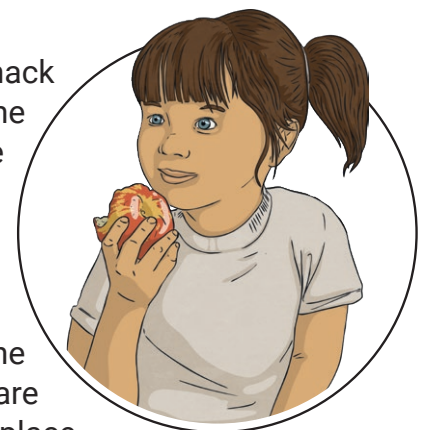


Take an Active Role

Ensure that appropriate controls and locks are installed on any devices children use to get online. Take an active role and determine when they can go online, how long for and what they are watching. Balance this with participating actively in other learning activities and their play.

Keep Screen Time Separate

Although it can be tempting to combine screen time with meal and snack times, avoid this where possible. Keeping meal times a screen-free time allows the focus to be on nutrition and sharing our thoughts with the family. It is also important to be mindful while eating to avoid excess snacking, which can be detrimental to our health.



Keep Screen Time Public

Consider having one room where children use screens, such as the living room or family room. This makes it easier to monitor what they are consuming and when, as well as ensuring that bedrooms are a calm place for sleeping and other areas are for playing, crafting and learning. Children often find this helpful to maintain a structure to the day.

Social Connections

Often, screen time gets in the way of real-life social connections. However, while children are at home with their families, using messaging and video calling apps can be a great way to continue relationships with friends and other family members. Use screen time positively to share photos and chat with your loved ones.

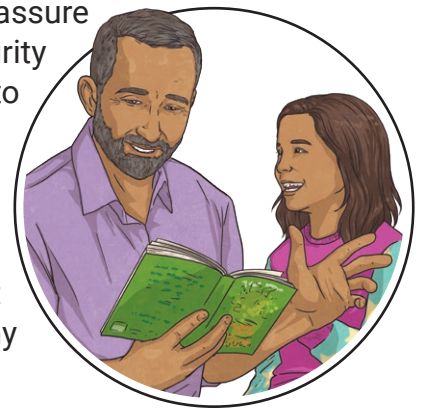


Limit Time

Consider a schedule for your work to allow you to spend time with your children, doing hands-on activities and exercise together. This should help you to limit the time they spend on screens and make the time they do have on screens more interactive and productive.

Talk About It

Make sure that children understand that they can, and should, speak to an adult about anything they see or experience online that makes them feel uncomfortable. If they do tell you about something they experienced online that has made them feel uncomfortable, reassure them and report anything that is inappropriate. Regularly review security software installed on laptops, tablets and other devices connected to the Internet.



Model Good Practice

Many adults are unaware of how much time they themselves spend on screens. When considering children's screen time, it is important to reflect on your own to make sure you are modelling healthy patterns to them.