

Children and Technology

From television to smartphones and electronic games, technology has a great influence on children, whether positive or negative. Parents must take control of technology, and regulate and supervise its use for their children. Here are a few things to consider when you are making decisions about how technology will be used in your home.

WHY CAN TECHNOLOGY BE HARMFUL?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, studies have shown that excessive media use can lead to attention problems, behavioral problems, language delays, sleep and eating disorders, vision problems, and obesity. The AAP discourages the use of any electronic media for children under the age of 2. After age 2, screen time should be limited to one to two hours per day of high quality content.

Some of the most important brain development in a child's life occurs in these early years. While all television and technology is educational in some way, most of it is not what we really want our children to learn. Many parents see screen time as a way to keep children quiet and safe; however, young children learn best by moving, and interacting with people and manipulating objects in their environment.



WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO?

- Take charge of the technology in your home. You are responsible to make and enforce family rules for technology use.
- Decide ahead of time what children may watch or what screen activities they may use within the two-hour daily maximum. Keep television and screens off at other times.
- Monitor your own screen usage and be aware of the amount of time you spend watching TV or engaging in technology. Your child has to compete with the screen for your eye contact and attention. When you are engaged in technology, you are not “with” your child, even if he/she is sitting right beside you.
- Keep televisions or other screens out of a child’s room. It becomes very difficult to monitor what a child is watching and how much time he/she spends watching it. It also deprives you and your child of an opportunity to spend time together. Some parents do this in order to avoid fights between family members over program selection. This conflict actually gives children an excellent opportunity to learn negotiation skills! Another concern about television or screens in a child’s room is the link to sleep deprivation and depression.
- Television and screens should be off during mealtime. Family mealtime is an important time for parents and children to reconnect, talk and share.
- Watch TV or play technology games WITH your child to add an element of personal interaction to screen time. Talk to your child about how your family’s values compare with what is seen on screens.
- Visit healthychildren.org for more information



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