



Talk 2 Me

Preschool Speech and Language ~ Early Identification ~ Intervention ~ Education

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Screen Time Information

What Does the Research Show?

Screens (TV, tablet, iPad, phones, computer, etc.) may be able to hold your baby's attention, however, children are unable to really understand the information until the end of their 2nd year. Children learn best through face-to-face interactions with their parents/caregivers. Learning at an early age is easier and faster when it happens in real time with real people. Quality age-appropriate media that is well-designed with specific learning goals, and requires responses from adults has been shown to help with some areas of cognitive development (e.g. early language and literacy skills, positive racial attitudes, and imaginative play).



Should I read electronic books or print books?

Research shows the quality of parent-child interactions during print books, especially for toddlers, is much better than electronic books. While reading print books, parents use a larger number of words, they relate more to their child's experiences (which supports their learning), and ask more open ended questions (which helps their child use more language). During electronic book reading, both parents and toddlers use fewer words, and their parents' words tend to focus more on the technology (e.g. "Swipe with your finger." "Don't touch that button.") rather than the story. Parents also ask fewer questions, comment less about the storyline, and read out loud less during electronic book reading compared with print. Electronic book reading also tends to be a more solitary and less collaborative activity which decreases parent-child interactions. These interactions promote learning and are important for improving your child's understanding of language because they expose them to new vocabulary words and grammar. These are the reasons why print books are recommended over electronic books.



Risks Associated with Screen Time:

- 2 or more hours per day under 12 months of age is associated with significant language delays
- 7 or more hours a day has been shown to have negative effects on attention
- TV left on as background noise negatively affects language acquisition, attention, cognitive development, and executive function in children under 5 years of age
- Screen time before bed reduces melatonin production, a critical chemical in the brain for regulating your sleep-wake pattern, which reduces the amount of sleep you get each night

Recommendations:

- Use print books whenever possible. If using electronic books, try to avoid ones with distracting features (e.g. animations/sounds) and focus on interacting with your child instead of the technology itself
- During shared book reading practice interactive reading techniques e.g. asking open-ending questions (e.g. “What’s happening here?”), expanding on an idea your child shares (e.g. Your child says, “Wagon” and you reply “A big, red wagon”), repeating what the child says, or relating the story content to your child’s experiences (e.g. if the story is about going to the beach you could ask “Remember when we went to the beach?”)
- No screen time for children under 2 years (except for programs like Skype or FaceTime where your child is interacting with family members)
- 1 hour of screen time per day for children 2-5 years of age
- Avoid using any screens (TV, computer, tablet, etc.) at least 1 hour before bed time
- Have daily “screen-free” times, especially during family meals and book-sharing



How to Minimize Screen Time:

- Set limits for yourself and your child, as your habits are a model for them
- Keep TV off in the background and during mealtimes.
- No TV, computers, etc. in their bedrooms
- Provide opportunities to play with other children their age by going to parks, play dates, Early ON Child & Family Centres
- Include physical activities in everyday routines (Children 1- 4 years old should be moving at least 180 minutes a day e.g. walking, running, crawling, etc.)

How to Reduce Risks Associated with Screen Time:

- Co-View: sit with them while you talk, point to, and play/sing along with your child
- Avoid ‘violent’ media e.g. cartoons with slapstick violence (preschoolers imitate what they see on TV)
- Choose programs where characters treat each other with care & respect (e.g. Sesame Street)
- Choose programs that talk directly to your child, repeat key words, and have clear links between spoken words and what is happening on the screen (e.g. Dora the Explorer, Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood, Team Umizoomie, etc.)
- Use parenting strategies to help teach your child self-regulation, self-calming, and limit setting skills (see: www.connectwithus.ca/ontario_early_years/parenting_courses_and_groups.html for more information on these skills)

Further Information/ References on:

- self-regulation, visit: <https://www.self-reg.ca/>
- screen time, visit: www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children
- physical activity guidelines, visit: www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/physical-activity-guidelines
 - www.csep.ca/en/guidelines/guidelines-for-other-age-groups
- Electronic Versus Print Books, visit: <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/143/4/e20182012>
 - Read: Munzer TG, Miller AL, Weeks HM, et al. Differences in Parent-Toddler Interactions with Electronic Versus Print Books, *Pediatrics*. 2019; 143 (4):e20182012