



Device Use: Too Much or Just Right?

Screen time refers to the amount of time spent using devices each day. Having some screen time can be beneficial, such as when your child uses devices to learn and connect with others. However, it is important to be aware that **spending an excessive amount of time using devices is unhealthy**, as it is associated with insufficient good quality sleep, sedentary behaviours, increased obesity, and poorer mental health and well-being.

These potential negative consequences are linked to the extent to which the use of devices displaces activities that are important for your child's development. E.g. sleeping, being physically active, or engaging in face-to-face interactions with family and friends.

It is important to ensure your child maintains a healthy balance of age-appropriate activities.



How to help your child achieve balanced screen time?

Have regular conversations with your child to better understand what they do online.

Discuss and develop a timetable with your child to moderate their time spent on screens. Children aged 7 - 12 should have consistent screen time limits. Parental control settings can be used to monitor and limit screen time as agreed with the child.

What do you think is a reasonable amount of time to spend on your phone for leisure?

What responsibilities do you have to complete before spending time on your device?



Knowing what your child is doing online is important too

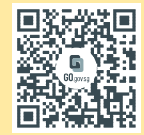
Beyond setting limits on your child's screen time, it is important to understand how your child is using their devices and what content they are watching as these can impact their well-being.

Have regular conversations with your child to better understand their screen use habits. Here are some example questions you may wish to consider:

- "That video you just watched looks interesting. Can you tell me what it is about?"
- "Do you mindlessly scroll through social media, or binge-watch videos or shows on streaming platforms? What could be a better use of your time that doesn't involve devices? Can we do something together?"
- "Is the online activity you are doing for learning or leisure? How long do you need to complete the activity? Let's agree on a time to stop."
- "What do you usually do online? Have you ever come across any inappropriate content that made you feel uncomfortable? Which aspects made you uncomfortable?"



Scan QR code to download the Ministry of Health's Guidance on Screen Use in Children for more information.





Helping Your Child Manage Device Use & Stay Safe Online



Develop a Family Screen Use Plan

- A family screen use plan consists of screen use rules, their consequences and screen-free activities that the family can engage in.
- As a family, create your screen use rules by discussing and agreeing on expectations of screen use and the consequences of breaking these rules clearly.

Your screen use rules can include:



Device-free times and places



Time limit for devices

- **“What are some suggestions on when and where devices should not be used?”**
- **“What should we do if we break our agreement?”**
- Decide as a family what screen-free activities you want to engage in, like going outdoors, playing sports or playing board games together.
 - **“What screen-free activities do you think we can do together?”**
- Engaging your child in the process of creating screen use rules and inviting them to suggest activities to do together helps increase their ownership of the whole family screen use plan.
 - **“What do you think of our screen use rules?”**



Role Model Behaviours and Have Open Conversations

- Be consistent in role modelling positive screen use behaviours and habits.
- Engage your child in open conversations about their online activities, how to navigate the online space and its associated challenges. For example:
 - State observation: **“I noticed you have been spending a lot of time on your device.”**
 - Ask open-ended questions: **“What do you usually do on your device?”**





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Use Parental Controls

- Parental controls refer to a group of settings that put you in control of what your child can see and do on a device or online. Such controls can allow you to supervise and monitor your child's online activities and protect them from inappropriate content, online sexual grooming, cyberbullying and other online risks.

Do note that these controls should not be the only method used to restrict your child's online activity.

- If you are using any parental controls and online safety features to manage or monitor your child's devices, you should have a conversation with them first.

Let them know:



You care for them and want them to be safe online.



Why there is a need to put these parental controls in place.



How the parental controls keep them safe.



Disable Incognito Mode and Enable Web Content Filters

Private browsing features can minimise your child's digital footprint, but they also allow your child to hide their exposure to inappropriate content. Consider disabling incognito mode and enabling web content filters.



Having open conversations about the use of parental controls, disabling private browsing or adjusting any settings on your child's devices is important so that your child understands your intentions. This enables you to better support them as they navigate the online space.

You can find out more information about how you can help your child stay safe online by scanning this QR code.

