OCTOBER

The Resource Consultant's Tip Sheet

Screen Time in Early Childhood

What Is Screen Time?

Screen time is the amount of time your child spends using devices with screens, such as:

- Television
- Tablets
- Smartphones
- Computers
- Video games

Children today are exposed to screens very early.



How Much Screen Time Is Recommended?

Canadian Pediatric Society (CPS) and Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) recommend:

- Under 2 years: No screen time
- Ages 2–4: Less than 1 hour per day
- Ages 5–17: Maximum 2 hours per day of recreational screen time

Research shows 83% of children aged 6 months to 6 years use screens daily for play, learning, or reading.

Potential Negatives of Too Much Screen Time

Excessive screen use can affect your child's development, health, and behaviour:

- Exposure to non–age–appropriate content
- Increased loneliness due to less face-to-face interaction
- Reduced imagination and creativity
- Risk of addictive patterns
- Higher likelihood of unhealthy snacking and weight gain

Additional risks include:

- Sleep difficulties
- Lower school readiness (language, social skills, early literacy)
- Inattention, aggression, difficulty self-soothing
- Nearsightedness





Benefits of Screen Time (When Used Well)

Balanced, intentional screen use can support learning and connection:

- Access to educational tools and information
- Learning new skills (languages, crafts, dance routines)
- Staying connected with family and friends
- Enjoying shared family activities (movies, games)
- Supporting communication for children with neurodevelopmental conditions



Are E-Books Helpful?

Yes, quality, age-appropriate e-books and learn-to-read apps can support language development when used together with an adult.

Is It OK to Use Screens to Calm My Child?

Screens may help in the moment, but repeated use can prevent children from learning self-soothing skills.
Use calm, consistent parenting strategies instead.

What If My Child Gets Upset When Screens Are Taken Away?



This is very common. Try:

- Using a calm voice
- Acknowledging feelings ("I see you're frustrated.")
- Redirecting to another activity
- Setting family screen rules early and consistently

Create a Supportive Environment



- Keep TVs and computers out of bedrooms
- Choose daily screen-free hours
- Create a screen-free room for play and relaxation
- Turn off screens during meals
- Ensure access to safe physical activities
- Offer healthy snacks
- Provide positive praise for non-screen activities

Will My Child Fall Behind Without Early Technology?

No evidence shows that early exposure to digital media improves development. Young children learn best through face-to-face interactions, play, and conversation with caring adults.



If you have concerns, please talk to your child's pediatrician.

REFERENCES:
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