

8 Tips on Controlling Use of Technology by Your Child

The world your children live in is vastly different from the one that existed when you were a kid, and the biggest differentiator is 'technology'. As a parent, you have every reason to be concerned about the impact of technology on your child.

Just a few decades ago, children were more than happy to spend their time playing outdoors, riding bikes, building sand castles, and using their imagination to keep themselves entertained. Household chores were a part of the children's routine and sitting down for dinner as a family was a cherished ritual.

Fast forward to today, in a world filled with smartphones, iPads, cable TV, video games, and social media. Parents are working longer hours, leading more stressful lives. The corporate work culture has come to expect that, employees stay 'connected' 24 hours a day. Not surprisingly, most parents are often engrossed in checking their laptops, phones, and tablets once they come home from work. So why should children behave any different?

Many young children are more adept at using mobile phones and tablets than their parents. Rather than playing outside, they are most interested in downloading the latest video game, watching TV, or using your phone/laptop. But what are the consequences?

Dangers of Technology for Young Children

Physical movement, human interaction, and exposure to nature are crucial for a child's overall development. Spending too much time behind a 'screen' overloads a child's auditory and visual senses, and can cause feelings of stress and general state of unease.

The growing lack of physical activity in young children is resulting in physical, psychological and behaviour disorders that health experts are only now beginning to identify. In the US and Canada, child obesity and diabetes has become a national epidemic and is being blamed largely of technology overuse. Prevalence of ADHD, autism, developmental delays, unintelligible speech, learning difficulties, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders in young children is rising at an alarming rate.

Unmonitored use of social media sites and the internet in general exposes children to a world of new dangers. For instance, access to porn at an early age can warp their thinking about themselves and the opposite sex.

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However, despite the problems associated with excessive exposure of young children to technology, one has to concede there are benefits as well.

Technology can benefit young children when used correctly and in moderation. Technology opens up many possibilities for making education a more interactive experience for children. The internet has certainly made it easier for children to access information, and be better informed. Learning how to use computers early on, prepares children for the technical skills

needed as they grow older (high school, college, jobs). Therefore, instead of denying access to technology, you need to focus on controlling access.

Here are some dos and don'ts on controlling your child's 'screen time' -

1. The American Academy of Paediatrics advises that children younger than two years should not be using technology. Preschool children should not be allowed to use phones, or watch TV for more than 2 hours a day (Australian paediatrics back this guidance).
2. Do not allow children to access the internet alone in their rooms
3. Set-up parental controls on using the computer, video games and TV in your house
4. Monitor your child's cell phone usage and ask them to seek your permission before using your phone
5. Set an example for your children. Limit the amount of television you watch or spend on the computer while at home. Read a book to encourage your young child to do the same. Exercise outdoors and encourage your children to join you.
6. Play with your kids.
7. At least have one meal a day at the table as a family, with the TV turned off.
8. Don't allow a TV in your child's room

Controlling your child's access to technology may seem like a difficult thing to do, but it is imperative that you do so for ensuring his/ her healthy development.

Meta description: Use of technology by children has its positives and negatives. Here are 8 tips for controlling how much time your child spends behind a screen.

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