

# TV, Computers and the Internet: Limiting Screen Time

Many children and adults spend hours in front of a screen. They watch TV or videos, play games and use the computer. This can be fun and educational, but make sure it doesn't take too much time from other activities or expose your child to harm. Here are some tips for keeping screen time safe and sound.



## Warning: Too Much Screen Time Can

- Interfere with developing a good self-concept and body image.
- Take away from time talking and playing with family and friends.
- Affect reading skills.
- Glamorize violence.
- Expose children to adult behaviors such as sex, alcohol, tobacco and drug use.
- Take the place of physical activity and lead to weight gain.

## Screen Use Tips

Limit entertainment screen time (TV, videos, games and Internet) to 1-2 hours per day. Use a kitchen timer.

- For children under 2, avoid TV. Choose activities that promote good brain growth, such as talking, playing, singing and reading.
- Involve your child in setting guidelines for choosing TV shows, games and computer activities. Use guides and ratings to help you.
- Keep the TV off during meals.
- Set certain days as media-free, and plan other fun things to do. The books at the end of this flyer have lots of ideas.
- Avoid using the TV or other screen entertainment as a reward.

- Turn off the TV when a chosen program is over. Record shows to watch later and skip the ads.
- Watch TV with your child. Talk about what you see and how problems can be solved without violence.
- Keep TVs and computers in a central place.
- Keep TVs and computers out of children's bedrooms, so you can stay involved.
- Turn on the radio, music or books on tape instead of looking at a screen.
- Be a good model and limit your own screen use.
- Teach children about advertising's aims. Talk about unrealistic messages in ads.
- On new TVs (since January 2000) use the V-chip to screen out shows with too much sex and violence.

## Internet Safety

The Internet can open up a world of fun and learning, but it also provides access to information and people children should avoid. Here's how you can help:

- Use a filter to screen sites you don't want your children to see. These aren't foolproof—you still need to supervise.
- Explain that people they meet online are not always who they say they are. Tell your child that what they read may not be true and what they write may not be private.
- If you don't know about computers or the Internet, ask your children to show you.

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## Internet Safety, continued

Teach children to:

- Never use a credit card or give out personal information unless you say it's OK. This includes: name, home address, phone number, age, race, family income, school name or address, or friends' names.
- Never share their password, even with friends.
- Never meet face-to-face with someone they "meet" online, unless you go with them to a public place.
- Never answer messages that make them feel uncomfortable, and tell you or another adult right away.
- Never use bad language or send mean messages online.
- Never copy information and claim it's their own, or copy software unless it is clearly marked "free."
- Know what kinds of sites you allow and why. Make sites off-limits if they are obscene, pornographic, violent, hate filled, racist, or offensive in other ways.

## To Learn More

### The Parent's Guide to Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace

Aftab, Parry, 2000

### Screen Smarts: A Family Guide to Media Literacy

DeGaetano, Gloria & Bander, Kathleen, 1996

### Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture

Levin, Diane, 1998

### Alternatives to the Screen

#### Family Fun Book: More than 400 Amazing, Amusing and All-Around Awesome Activities for the Entire Family!

Hilton, Joni, 1998

## 5,001 Things for Kids to Do

Kipfer, Barbara Ann, 2001

## Simple Fun for Busy People

Krane, Gary, 1998

## 1,001 Things to Do with Your Kids and 1,001 More Things to Do with Your Kids

Waller Kruger, Caryl, 1988, 2000

## Play and Learn

Editors of Parent's Magazine, 2000

## The Read-Aloud Handbook

Trelease, Jim, 2001

## 365 Days of Creative Play

(versions for infants to age 2 and age 2 and up)  
Ellison, Sheila and Gray, Judith, 1995

## Web sites:

[www.tvturnoff.org](http://www.tvturnoff.org)

[www.childrenspartnership.org](http://www.childrenspartnership.org)

[www.mediaandthefamily.org](http://www.mediaandthefamily.org)

Resources: American Academy of Pediatrics, *Children, Adolescents, and Television, Policy Statement. Pediatrics.* 2001; 107: 423-426. Nelsen, Lott and Glenn, *Positive Discipline A-Z: 1001 Solutions to Everyday Parenting Problems* (1999). Real Vision, *Warning: Too Much TV is Hazardous to Your Health*, TV Turnoff Network Web site, [www.tvturnoff.org](http://www.tvturnoff.org). *Parents Guide to the Internet* [www.missingkids.org](http://www.missingkids.org)

## For More Information

- Your health care provider
- Children's Resource Line:  
(206) 987-2500 or 1-866-987-2500  
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.

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