

Reducing Screen Time



What does treatment look like?



Children are growing up in a digital world, and screens are a big part of our daily lives. Screen time includes time on electronics like smartphones, tablets, computers, televisions and gaming systems.



The American Psychological Association recommends that **children under age 2** have no screen time besides family communications (like video chats), while **children ages 2-5** should have less than 1 hour a day, and **children over age 5** should have less than 2 hours a day.¹



You may want to set **screen time limits** if you notice that screen time is causing problems for your child, like increased irritability/temper tantrums when screens are removed, difficulty sleeping due to phone use, or distractibility during household tasks or homework.



If limitations have already been established and you continue to see challenging behaviors around screen time, you may want to consider seeking **extra support** (e.g., therapist or school counselor).

¹ What do we really know about kids and screens? (apa.org)



What can I do?

FOR PARENTS:

- Reduce screen time by small increments:** Restrict screen time by small amounts, like removing 15 minutes per day, until you reach your desired amount of screen time.
- Set parental controls:** Most phones, tablets, and computers have parental controls that limit the amount of time your child can use specific apps or the entire device. Look in the Settings menu of your device to add parental controls. Some websites, like YouTube, may also have parental control options.

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- ✓ **Screen free zones:** Create screen free zones for everyone in your home. This could be the dinner table, bedrooms at night, or specific areas of the house. It is important that all family members (including parents) follow the screen free zone rules.
- ✓ **Replace content:** There are many educational and engaging apps and games for youth. Consider replacing some of your child's screen time content with games that can support their reading or math skills.
- ✓ **Join in:** Screen time is often a solo activity for children. To make this time more interactive, caregivers can join in by taking turns, playing a game together, or talking about what your child is watching.
- ✓ **Create a Family Media Plan:** This can help set expectations around screen time use at home. The American Academy of Pediatrics has an [example here](#).



FOR TEENS:

- ✓ **Limit notifications:** It can be distracting to get a lot of notifications on your phone. Consider putting your phone on Do Not Disturb when you are working or turn off your notifications for certain apps in the Settings menu.
- ✓ **Monitor your screen time:** Check your screen time use on your phone and set up restrictions on how long you can use your phone or individual apps in the Settings menu.
- ✓ **Try screen-free activities:** Think about things you could do for fun that don't have to involve screen time, like doing art, music, sports, or activities and outings with family and friends.
- ✓ **Sleep without screens:** Try leaving your phone outside the bedroom when you fall asleep to limit distractions.



How do I get help?

If you need help, talk to your primary care provider or get support from a mental health provider. To find a mental health provider, call the phone number on the back of your child's insurance card and ask for a list of covered mental health providers in your area. You can also search for providers on your insurance company's website. For support finding resources for housing, food, and more, visit the [Children's National Hospital Community Resources website](#)

- ✓ Scan below or [click here](#) for more for more information about how to find a mental health provider and how to get help in a crisis.

