



Technology and Tots

It's a new world and technology is king! It is not unusual to see toddlers with a mobile electronic device in their hands, working the device like pros. However, this new emergence of technology in the form of e-readers and smartphones causes our children to have full access to technology at all times. Technology has reshaped and redefined how we communicate, entertain and even play.

What do the experts recommend?

Research continues on the effects of screen time on young children. It is agreed upon that children under the age of 2 should not have any screen time. This may be unrealistic in everyday life, so parents need to consider what works for their families, especially if they have older children.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 1-2 hours of screen time per day for children age 2 and above. However, the average screen time for children in America between the ages of 8 to 18 is 7.5 hours, excessively exceeding the recommendation of 5.5 hours. Children should have 2-3 hours of active physical play.

Also, it is recommended that human interaction is better than screen time. Movement, touch, human connection, and exposure to nature are important to healthy child development. Technology could never replace human interaction. The more provision parents make for technology, the deeper the connection between parent and child becomes.

Overuse of technology

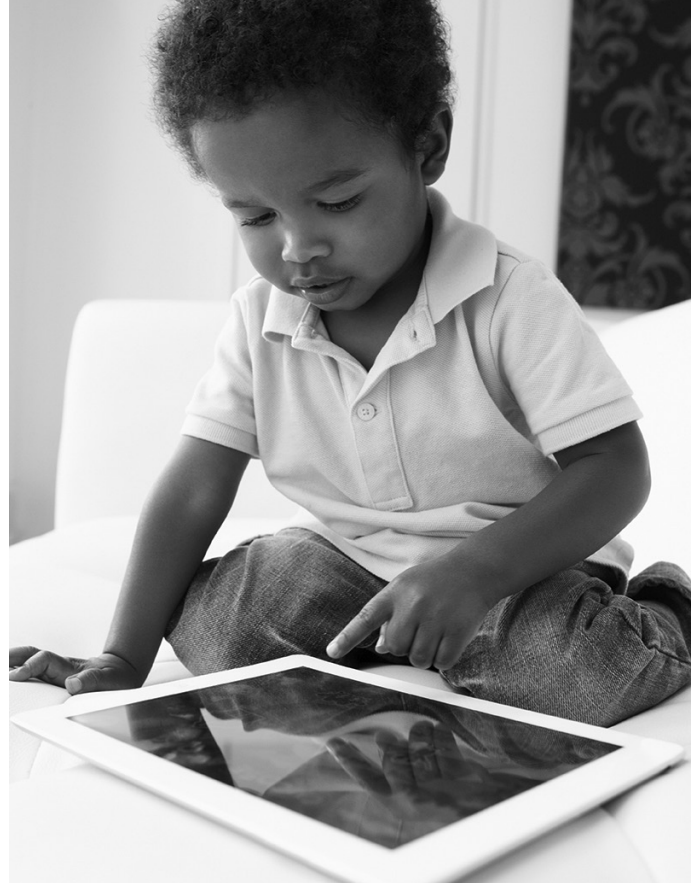
Spending too much time with screens increases children's risk of:

- > Child obesity
- > Aggression
- > Lack of imagination
- > Lack of self-control
- > Sleep deprivation
- > Mental illness
- > Delayed development

What parents can do

Worried about the amount of screen time your child is getting? Consider these strategies:

- > Get the TV out of the children's bedrooms
- > Talk about it
- > Evaluate appropriate technology by age
- > Institute "tech breaks"
- > Set aside "sacred time"
- > Encourage "healthy" technology





Age-appropriate guidelines for using electronic devices with your young child

There are ways to maximize parent-child interaction while minimizing the potentially harmful effects of technology on your tot. The following lists include age-appropriate guidelines for using electronic devices together.

Toddlers

- > Parents should be a part of the play time that includes digital materials (i.e., iPads, e-readers, smartphones, etc.) Use this time to teach your children new words and show them the appropriate use.
- > Don't sit your child in front of screen if they are upset. If infants are fussy, they need the comfort of a caring adult, not an electronic toy. Very little research supports that infants and toddlers learn from watching videos.
- > Use your iPad to engage your child in his/her own world. Use it as an album book to show your toddler their family, animals and the world.
- > Use technology to assist children who have special needs or delays.
- > Use technology to record your children's progress.

Preschoolers and kindergartners

- > Allow children to freely explore touch screens loaded with appropriate games.
- > Provide opportunities for children to begin to explore and feel comfortable using "traditional" mouse and keyboard computers to use Websites or look up answers.
- > Take pictures of block buildings or artwork that children have made and put it on the refrigerator.
- > Use technology for children who have special needs.
- > Record children's stories about their drawings or their play.

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