

# CHAT

Communication Help and Awareness Team

Speech and Language Therapy



## Screen time for your child

A guide for parents

**Helping you make an informed decision about using TV, tablets, phones and consoles at home**

## What do we mean by “Screen time?”

“Screen time” refers to any time spent looking at a screen.

This includes:

- TV – including watching television programmes, DVDs, and playing games consoles
- Tablets
- Smart Phones
- Laptops or PCs



## How much screen time is ok for my child?



Advice from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) suggests that children should have TV free days, or have a two hour limit on the time spent in front of screens.

A limited amount of child-friendly screen time can be educational, but it's important to ensure the content is appropriate for your child's age.

## How important is what my child watches or plays?

It is important to ensure that programmes or games are age-appropriate for your child. Try to avoid anything aimed at adult audiences (e.g. News, Soaps, Music Channels and Talk Shows like Jeremy Kyle)

Based on viewing patterns, it's estimated that children starting school will have seen 8000 murders, and 100,000 other acts of violence and destruction during screen time

## Why should we limit screen time?



Children learn best from real life experiences and interaction, and time spent in front of a screen is time not spent interacting with those around them.

Evidence shows that although from 15 months, children may copy actions or words from TV, they are not actively able to learn language from TV until they are around 2½ years old.

## What are the possible risks of too much screen time?

- Less time for real life learning (e.g. sharing books and play), and interactions between you and your child
- Having TV on in the background can disrupt very young children's play
- TV moves very quickly (there is a change on the screen about every 6 seconds). Real life has a slower pace which helps children to develop their concentration skills
- Watching a lot of TV at a young age has been linked to concentration difficulties in later childhood
- Computer and video games do not encourage the development of the front part of the brain, which controls behavior, judgement and concentration
- Irregular sleep patterns
- Increased risk of childhood obesity



## Top tips for screen time

It's unrealistic to expect that children will not be exposed to screens at all, and used in moderation they can be a great way to supplement education and provide a source of entertainment.

Try to find the balance by:

- aiming for **some** screen free days
- limiting screen time to 2 hours per day on days this isn't possible
- being a good example – try to limit your own use of phones and tablets, and turn the TV off if no-one is watching
- choosing things you and your child can watch or play together. Your child will learn lots from having the opportunity to discuss what they are seeing on the screen

