

GET ACTIVE

BE HEALTHY!



Spend less time with TV, video games, and computer games.

Screen time and health

Did you know that kids who watch TV a lot are risking a lifetime of health problems? It's a proven fact: too much screen time (watching TV, playing on the computer, and playing video games) is associated with:

- Violent behavior.
- Poorer school performance.
- Lower reading scores.
- Sleep pattern disturbances.
- Overweight.
- Consumption of junk food.
- Bad habits later in life (like tobacco and alcohol abuse).

Join millions of others and check out what else life has to offer! What can kids do instead? The sky's the limit.

Get active. Get imaginative. Get social!

- Walk the dog.
- Take a hike.
- Run a half mile.
- Climb a hill.
- Play a game.
- Visit a park.
- Ride a bike.
- Read a book.
- Throw a ball.
- Visit a friend.
- Put on a show.
- Draw a picture.
- Have a conversation.
- Smell the roses.

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Parents: why less is more



Do your children a favor: turn off the TV, the video game, and the computer game. Time staring at those screens is called screen time, and it's bad for kids' health and behavior.

Kids who spend less time in front of a screen also:

- Do better in school.
- Read more.
- Sleep better.
- Eat healthier foods.
- Weigh less.
- Are less prone to violence, early sexual activity, and smoking.

Pediatricians say:

- No screen time for children younger than 2.
- No TVs in bedrooms.
- Limit screen time to one to two hours a day.
- Keep an eye on what your kids watch.

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How to get started

1. Keep track. Be aware of what you watch and why. Fill out our log sheet with your children.
2. Consider a week without screen time.
3. Make the commitment as a family.
4. Plan for things you'd like to do and post your list on the TV. For ideas, see some of the 101 screen-free activities at www.screentime.org.
5. Pay special attention to times when you most depend on screen time and make alternate plans for them.
6. At the end of the week, talk about the benefits of limiting screen time. Then set your own TV-turnoff times, like one day a week or during meals.
7. Remember, it takes a long time to change habits. Whatever works to reduce screen time is a positive step.

Tips for reducing screen time at home

- Put your TV in a place where it isn't the center of attention.
- Turn off the TV during meal times.
- Don't use screen time as a reward or punishment.
- Don't use screen time as a babysitter.



Resources

For tips, tools, and information about the benefits of reducing screen time, check out these resources.

Web sites

Kaiser Permanente
www.kp.org/tvturnoff

Center for Screen-Time Awareness
(formerly TV-Turnoff Network)
www.screentime.org

OHSU's Doernbecher Children's Hospital
www.doernbecher.com

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org/healthtopics/mediause.cfm

National Institute on Media and the Family
www.mediafamily.org

Center on Media and Child Health
www.cmch.tv/

University of Washington
(Active Bodies, Active Minds Project)
www.waabam.org

Adult books

The Elephant in the Living Room: Make Television Work for Your Kids

By Dimitri A. Christakis and Frederick J. Zimmerman
Rodale Books, 2006

The Plug-in Drug

By Marie Winn
Penguin, 25th anniversary edition, 2002

Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think and What We Can Do About It

By Jane M. Healy
Simon & Schuster, 1999

Consuming Kids

By Susan Linn
Anchor, 2005

Books for kids

Fix-it Board Book

By David McPhail
Dutton Juvenile, 2002; ages 2–6

TV breaks, and reading turns out to be more fun.

The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV

By Stan Berenstain and Jan Berenstain
Random House Books for Young Readers, 1984; ages 4–8

Mom puts her foot down; kids need to play!

Turn off the TV (Mama Rex and T Series)

By Rachel Vail and Steve Bjorkman
Rebound by Sagebrush, 2003; ages 4–8

Mama Rex figures out what to do when the power goes.

Box-Head Boy

By Christine M. Winn and David Walsh
Fairview Press, 1996; ages 4–8

Denny's head turns into a TV until he remembers real life and decides to spend his time there instead.

Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair

By Patricia Polacco
Philomel, 1996; ages 6–10

Aunt Chip teaches a town to read after they'd given it up for TV.



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How much screen time does your family get?

Screen time is the time spent in front of the TV or playing video games or computer games. Screen time means not moving around. But our bodies need movement to be healthy.

Keep your family healthy. Keep track of your screen time for one week with our screen time log.

Make a copy of the sheet for each member of the family. Make it a fun game to see who has the least screen time. Try to decrease your totals over time.

And remember, change doesn't happen quickly. Any reduction in screen time is good for your family.

Healthy habits

- No more than an hour of screen time each day.
- An hour of activity each day.
- Healthy snacks—five servings of fruit and vegetables daily.
- Getting up to move or stretch during screen time.

Screen-time alternatives

- Playing with friends.
- Walking the dog.
- Inventing a game.
- Reading and writing.

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Screen time log sheet for: _____

How many hours of screen time (TV, video games, computer games) did your family have each day?
Add up the totals for the week.

Activities during the week of: _____

| | | Amount of time | What you did for screen time | What snacks you ate |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Monday | before lunch | | | |
| | after lunch | | | |
| Tuesday | before lunch | | | |
| | after lunch | | | |
| Wednesday | before lunch | | | |
| | after lunch | | | |
| Thursday | before lunch | | | |
| | after lunch | | | |
| Friday | before lunch | | | |
| | after lunch | | | |
| Saturday | before lunch | | | |
| | after lunch | | | |
| Sunday | before lunch | | | |
| | after lunch | | | |
| Total amount of screen time: | | | | |

Things you did instead of screen time or things you'd like to try next week: _____

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What did you and your family do instead of watching TV?

Draw a picture or write a story—or both.



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Kids: cool things to do

There are lots of ways to have fun besides watching TV or playing video games or computer games. Take a look!

- Paint or draw a picture.
- Write a story.
- Make sock puppets and put on a show.
- Make up a new board or card game and try it out with family or friends.

- Create a drum set from household containers.
- Organize a treasure hunt or scavenger hunt.
- Bike, skate, Frisbee, swing, swim, or go to the park.
- Read a book.
- Read a book to someone else.

For more ideas, check out some of the ideas from the list of 101 screen-free activities at www.screentime.org.



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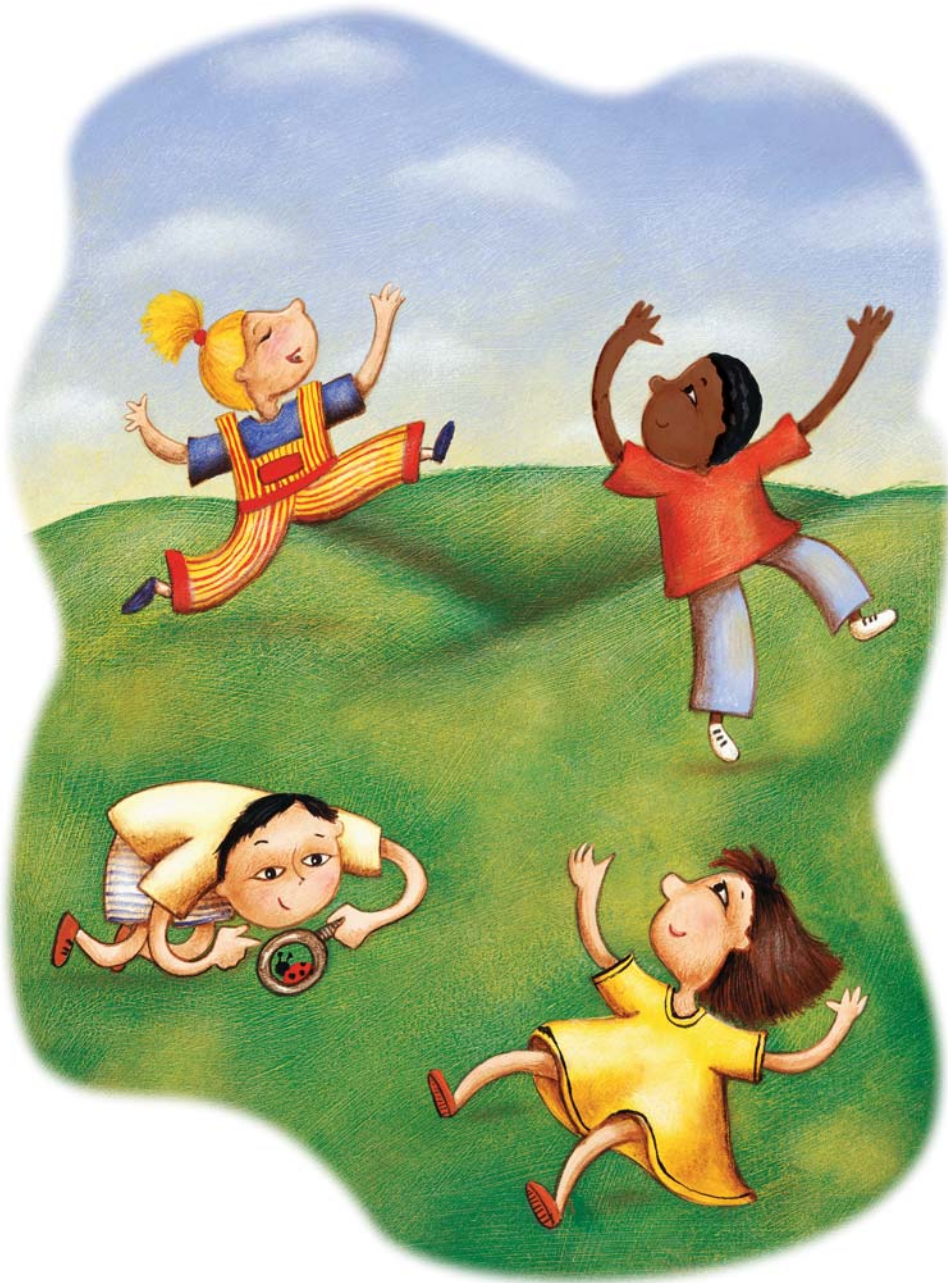
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Teachers and leaders: fun activities

Set an example! You can help families become less dependent on screen activities for entertainment.

Set the stage

- Read books with kids (see the resource list).
- Talk about what kids enjoy besides screen time.
- Use math class to fill out our log of screen time and graph the results.
- Involve parents: Have each family member fill out the log and compare results.
- Have children make collages or drawings of favorite activities that don't involve screen time. Encourage children to hang the finished artwork on or near the TV at home.
- Write a newsletter article and send handouts to parents.
- Order materials from the Center for Screen-Time Awareness (www.screentime.org).
- Gather colleagues to help organize events for your school or organization (see next page for ideas).
- Declare your organization or school screen-free for a week or more. Put up posters or make a display with handouts from the Center for Screen-Time Awareness.



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Try a screen-free week

- Have a contest. Which individual or group can spend the least time with a screen for a week or a month? Offer prizes, but make sure they aren't high-sugar or high-fat foods!
- Organize a special evening at which parents, older children, and community members teach fun, screen-free activities, such as knitting, chess, or salsa dancing, and serve healthy snacks.
- Set up a "slumber party" in an unusual location (such as the library) for one night and tell stories to the group, play board games, or do other non-screen activities.
- Use the "More reading, less TV" idea from the Center for Screen-Time Awareness. Bring an old TV into the classroom. Assign books to read. For every book read, fill out a slip of paper and tape it to the old TV. Eventually the TV is buried under the "books."

Join forces

Enlist allies to help encourage children to have more time for being active, creating, and interacting by spending less time with entertainment screens. Here are some possible allies:

- School personnel (teachers, nurses, food service workers).
- PTA members.
- Preschool teachers.
- Parks and recreation department staff.
- YMCA and/or community center staff.
- Sports leagues.
- Libraries.
- Extension service.
- Health care agencies and providers.
- Faith community.
- Child advocacy and service agencies.



Books for classroom reading

Fix-it Board Book

By David McPhail

Dutton Juvenile, 2002; ages 2–6

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Facts about screen time and kids



Thousands of studies support the idea that kids are healthier and better adjusted and perform better in school when they don't get too much time watching TV or playing video games and computer games, which we call "screen time."

Studies have linked excessive television viewing (and sometimes video games) with

- Poor performance in school, especially in language and reading.
- Less imaginative ability.
- Problems focusing.
- Sleep pattern disturbances.
- Excess weight.
- Poor planning and judgment.
- Tendency to resort to violence to solve problems.

Screen time and weight gain

- Each hour of TV viewing by school-age kids is associated with 167 additional calories.
- Just one hour of TV viewing daily is associated with higher consumption of fast food, sweets, chips, and pizza.
- Two or more hours of TV viewing daily is associated with significant likelihood of overweight among 3-year-olds.
- Children with TV in their bedrooms snack more than those without.

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Screen time and violence

- Children typically witness 10,000 acts of violence on TV each year.
- 61 percent of TV shows include violence.
- Heavy TV watching at age 4 correlates with bullying behavior between ages 6 and 11.
- Early grade school children exposed to TV violence were more violent adults 15 years later.

Screen time and school

- Middle school children who watched more television, movies, and video games did worse in school than those who watched less.
- Third graders with a bedroom TV scored seven to nine points lower on standardized tests than those without a bedroom TV.

Screen time and sleep

- Television viewing among infants and children is associated with irregular sleep schedules.
- Teens watching more than three hours of TV per day are more likely to have sleep problems in early adulthood.

Sources

American Academy of Pediatrics

Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine

Developmental Psychology

Kaiser Family Foundation

Pediatrics

Public Health Nutrition

