



Device Use: Too Much or Just Right?

Screen time refers to the amount of time spent using devices each day. Having some screen time can be beneficial, such as when your child uses devices to learn and connect with others. However, it is important to be aware that **spending an excessive amount of time using devices is unhealthy**, as it is associated with insufficient good quality sleep, sedentary behaviours, increased obesity, and poorer mental health and well-being.

These potential negative consequences are linked to the extent to which the use of devices displaces activities that are important for your child's development. E.g. sleeping, being physically active, or engaging in face-to-face interactions with family and friends.

It is important to ensure your child maintains a healthy balance of age-appropriate activities.



How to help your child achieve balanced screen time?

Have regular conversations with your child to better understand what they do online.

Discuss and develop a timetable with your child to moderate their time spent on screens. Children aged 7 - 12 should have consistent screen time limits. Parental control settings can be used to monitor and limit screen time as agreed with the child.

What do you think is a reasonable amount of time to spend on your phone for leisure?

What responsibilities do you have to complete before spending time on your device?



Knowing what your child is doing online is important too

Beyond setting limits on your child's screen time, it is important to understand how your child is using their devices and what content they are watching as these can impact their well-being.

Have regular conversations with your child to better understand their screen use habits. Here are some example questions you may wish to consider:

- “That video you just watched looks interesting. Can you tell me what it is about?”
- “Do you mindlessly scroll through social media, or binge-watch videos or shows on streaming platforms? What could be a better use of your time that doesn't involve devices? Can we do something together?”
- “Is the online activity you are doing for learning or leisure? How long do you need to complete the activity? Let's agree on a time to stop.”
- “What do you usually do online? Have you ever come across any inappropriate content that made you feel uncomfortable? Which aspects made you uncomfortable?”



Scan QR code to download the Ministry of Health's Guidance on Screen Use in Children for more information.

