

Screen Time at Home

According to the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP), shows such as Sesame Street can improve cognitive, literacy, and social outcomes for children ages 3–5. Educational apps from Sesame Street and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) have also shown effective in teaching literacy skills to preschool-age children. When parents actively participate with their child and provide feedback, it helps the child to understand and build their knowledge. However, most of the apps labeled under the “educational” category in the app store are not as effective due to a focus on rote academic skills, they are not based on researched early childhood curriculum, and most are not designed for both child and parent to be engaged in the activity (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016).

AAP recommends that “For children ages two to five years, limit screen use to one hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.” Screen time should be educational content and promote good social skills.

“...Higher-order thinking skills and executive functions essential for school success, such as task persistence, impulse control, emotional regulation, and creative, flexible thinking, are best taught through unstructured and social (not digital) play, as well as responsive parent-child interactions (AAP 2016).

The Downsides to Screen Time

- Media use is linked to obesity.
- Media use interferes with sleep.
- Media use can interfere with development in young children.
- Media use gets in the way of interactions between people.
- Screens displace other activities.
- Media can influence behavior in ways that aren't good for children.
- Mixing homework and entertainment media interferes with academic efficiency.
- Media, especially social media, gives bullies a new tool to use.

How to Use Media Wisely at Home

- Screens should be turned off for meals and an hour before bedtime.
- Devices should be charged outside of the bedroom at night.
- Playtime, family time, and homework time should be screen-free.
- Families should establish a family media plan that includes guidelines for safe use of devices and how to be a responsible digital citizen.
- Families should ensure that all children get enough sleep, exercise, and screen-free downtime.
- Parents and caregivers must set a good example when it comes to media; children pay more attention to what we do than what we say.



References:

Media and Young Minds. (2016). *Pediatrics*, 138(5). doi:10.1542/peds.2016-2591

PED. (2019). New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines.