

Should You Set Limits on Your Child's Screen Time?



It is very common for patients to ask me whether they need to set limits on their children's screen time. As much as I would like to give a very simple answer, there is not one response that fits all families. While I am quick to say that

excessive screen time is not healthy for children, there are occasions when spending many hours in front of a screen is unlikely to be harmful. Whether this be after getting some a new videogame at Christmas or binge-watching Harry Potter movies with one's siblings, there are times that too much screen time may be the same as spending too much time with family.

Another complication to providing a simple answer is that many kids don't need their parents to set screen time limits. These kids are full of energy to do other things. They prefer to be outdoors rather than indoors. They're very busy schoolwork, afterschool activities, and their friends. Or they might just not like playing on screens and prefer more hands-on and active pursuits.

A host of recent studies suggest that excessive screen time is one of the major health issues amongst parents of elementary school, preteen, and teenage children in the United States, Australia, and Asia. And not only is excessive screen time concerning but so is the inappropriate use of screen time. As smartphones become more prevalent -78% of US children ages 12 and above have cell phones and the average age for a child's first smartphone is ten- kids have far more capacity to access materials that are inappropriate and unhealthy for them.



So while I don't like to give a direct answer to the question of should you set limits on your child screen time, I am very clear with parents that they need to be involved with their children's screen time use. Helping them to know what's

appropriate versus inappropriate, assisting them in setting their own limits, and perhaps most importantly ensuring that they engage in a variety of healthy non-screen activities is the key.

To learn more about some of these topics I encourage you to read [some of the articles](#) that I have written for our LearningWorks for Kids website. If you want to know more, check out my book, [Playing Smarter in the Digital World](#) as well.