

Limit Screen Time



Screen time is any amount of time you spend watching TV (including videos and DVDs), playing video games (including computer and handheld video games), or any other time spent on the computer or text messaging. Screen time related to schoolwork is not included.

On average, American children watch 28 hours of television per week. Over the year, that's 1,500 hours (compared with 900 hours spent in school) – and that's just television screen time! Limiting non-school-related screen time leads to a healthier lifestyle for you and your family!

How much screen time is too much?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children get less than two hours of entertainment screen time each day. Kids younger than two should have no screen time.

Why is it important to limit screen time?

Since screen time takes kids away from other activities with friends and family, limiting it increases kids' energy level and encourages them to participate in more social activities. In addition, many people snack while in front of a screen, and may not pay attention to how much they're eating, leading them to overeat.

What should we choose instead of screen time?

Here are some alternatives to screen time activities:

- Organize a game night with family or friends. Make it a weekly event.
- Listen to music, work on a hobby, visit a friend or do physical activities.
- Make mealtime family time! Focus on catching up with each other, and don't invite the TV to join you!
- Get involved in your community: volunteer at your church or community garden.
- Join a club, community center, or sports team.

Limiting screen time is a healthy choice for you and your family. Making a change to your habits doesn't have to be drastic. Start with a small goal and build on it to make it last!

How Can We Limit Screen Time?



Limiting screen time can help improve your family's health, but it can be hard to change your habits! Here are some tips to help get you started.

- Each family member should track his or her screen time each day.
- Set a goal for yourself. Make sure it's realistic and achievable. For example, if you spend five hours watching TV each day, you can set a goal to lower it to four.
- Get the whole family involved in some friendly competition. Supporting each other's efforts will make it easier for everyone to do well.
- Use the diary in this packet to record your goal and track your progress. Make copies of the diary before you start so you'll have one for every week.

Making it easier to limit screen time

These ideas will help you stay focused and reach your goals. The easier it is for you to make good choices, the easier it will be to limit screen time!

- Get started by making a family favorites list. What are your favorite non-screen time activities and which new activities do you want to try?
- Set screen time rules about how much and what the family watches on television, and how much time is allowed to play video games and be on the computer. Post the rules where everyone can see them.
- Keep TVs and computers in a common area where the family can use them together. Try to keep TVs out of the bedrooms!
- If you like the TV on while you're doing other things, try listening to music instead.
- Don't use screen time as a reward or punishment for good or bad behavior.

Track your progress and reward your family for a job well done!

To start limiting screen time, set your goal and go for it! Write your goal on the contract and use the diary to track your progress. Don't get discouraged if you don't meet your goal every day. Each day is a fresh start! Remember to reward yourself and your family for your efforts. Take a walk, play a game, read a book together. Celebrate your efforts and your success!