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## How to manage kids' screen time

Devices are everywhere in the digital age. The Statista Research Department notes that a 2020 survey found the average North American has access to more than 10 connected devices in his or her household. Though adults may be capable of governing their screen time, kids may not be so disciplined.

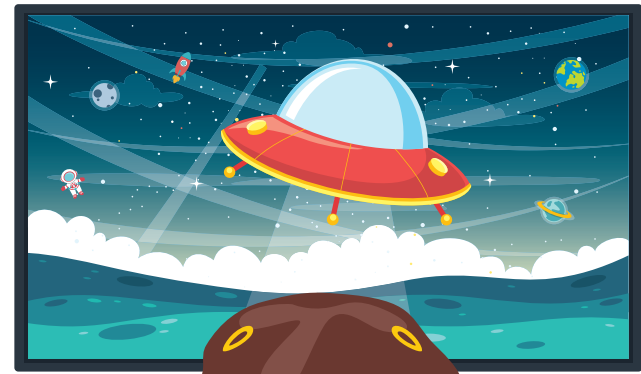
Devices can be valuable learning tools for young students, but the American Academy of Pediatrics notes that excessive media use can put children at risk of obesity, lost sleep, addiction, and violence.

So it's imperative that parents emphasize balance and moderation as they negotiate their children's device usage. In an effort to help parents establish and maintain that balance, the AAP has developed its Family Media Plan, which parents can use to customize guidelines on screen time in their households. A family media plan can help parents ensure their children aren't spending too much time staring at screens and it can serve as a valuable means to monitoring youngsters' online lives, potentially alerting moms and dads to instances of bullying or other dangerous situations.

The following are some guidelines parents can follow as they customize their family media plans.

- Establish screen-free times and zones. Establishing a time of day when devices cannot be used and areas of the home where they should not be taken can help parents govern kids' screen times. For example, by establishing children's bedrooms as screen-free zones, parents can make sure kids aren't spending all of their time staring at screens when they're behind closed bedroom doors.

- Research apps and programs. The AAP recommends parents research the age-appropriateness and ratings of apps and programs before installing them on devices. Speak with children's teachers to determine which apps and programs kids will need for school. Read fellow parents' ratings before installing any entertainment apps and programs on devices children will use.



programs on devices children will use.

- Use tech to monitor tech. "Family Sharing" capabilities on Apple devices allow parents to manage devices and

screen usage across the household. Parents can add children to their accounts and then set daily time limits on apps children will use. They also can make certain apps off limits for children to keep kids safe. Other device manufacturers offer similar tools to help parents effectively monitor and control kids' device usage.

- Encourage new interests. Parents can help to control screen time by encouraging new interests and introducing children to new activities that do not involve screens. Commit time each weekend to activities that do not involve screens, such as hiking, gardening and painting. Exposing children to activities that don't involve screens is a great way to get them off the couch and away from their devices. If kids don't take to a given activity, keep trying.

Devices are a big part of life in the digital age. Parents can develop family plans that allow for screen time but also emphasize activities that call for some time away from our devices. (MCC)





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