Children's Institute

Less Screen Time, More Learning

Why Limit Screen Time for Young Children?

Too much screen use, especially fast-paced videos and video games, can crowd out activities that are critical for healthy development and early literacy. American Academy of Pediatrics notes that children learn best through responsive interactions, conversation, play, and shared experiences with caregivers.

Potential Impacts of Excessive Screen Time



Fewer opportunities for language development

Children build vocabulary through conversations, not passive viewing.



Reduced reading readiness

Time spent on screens can replace reading, storytelling, and book exploration.



Sleep disruption

Excessive media use can crowd out healthy sleep routines that support learning and attention.



Less family interaction

Children develop literacy skills through back-and-forth conversations, not just exposure to words.

Literacy-Building Activities to Do Instead



Read Together

Just 15 minutes a day of shared reading supports language, early brain development, and school readiness.



Talk Throughout the Day

Describe what you're doing, ask questions, and encourage conversation during meals, walks, and errands. This builds vocabulary and comprehension.



Sing Songs & Rhymes

Nursery rhymes and songs help children hear patterns in language and develop early awareness of the sounds in languages.



Draw, Scribble & Write

Drawing and early writing activities strengthen the skills children need before formal reading and writing.



Engage in Pretend Play

Storytelling and imaginative play build vocabulary, comprehension, and narrative skills.

Every minute spent reading, talking, singing, and playing helps build the foundation for lifelong literacy.

Sources

- *American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): Early Literacy and Math [aap.org]*
- *AAP Literacy Promotion Policy Statement (2024) [publications.aap.org]*
- *AAP Literacy Promotion Technical Report (2024) [publications.aap.org], [readingrockets.org]*
- *AAP Early Childhood Development and Screen Time Toolkit [aap.org]*
- *HealthyChildren.org Media Guidance [healthychildren.org], [healthychildren.org]*

To learn more: Early Literacy - Children's Institute