



# Parenting for Prevention: Screen Time

## About Screen Time



We are living in a technology-rich world with a “wired-in” culture. While there has been inconclusive research on the pure “good” and “bad” of screen time on the adolescent brain, what is true is that screen time takes away from other productive and healthy activities, including exercise, sleep, peer and family interactions, academics, and “unplugged” activities.

Not all screen time is created equal. Technology devices serve many different purposes ... some are purely for entertainment and others can support education and learning. The **American Academy of Pediatrics** and the **World Health Organization** – both leaders in setting screen-time guidelines – agree that balance is key.

American Academy of Pediatric Guidelines	
Children under 18 months	No screen time, except video chatting
Children 18 – 24 months	Limited high-quality programming, co-view & co-play
Children 2 - 5 years	Limit 1 hour per day of high quality programming
Children 5+ years	Create a family media plan and be consistent with enforcement of screen-free times and zones

World Health Organization Guidelines	
Children under 1	No screen time
Children under 5	Limit 1 hour per day of screen time

## Risks of Too Much Screen Time

- Difficulty sleeping at night
- Increased risk of anxiety, attention problems, depression
- Loss of social skills
- Behavioral problems
- Increased risk for obesity
- Blurred visions & difficulty focusing
- Headaches/migraines
- Sore neck
- Sensitivity to light
- Less time for play
- Loss of creativity
- Violence



### TERMINOLOGY

**Screen time**  
Catch all term for the time children and teens spend interacting with TVs, computers, smartphones, digital pads and video games.

**Passive Consumption**  
Watching TV, reading, listening to music

**Interactive Consumption**  
Playing video/online games, browsing the Internet

**Communication**  
Video-chatting, using social media

**Content Creation**  
Using devices to make digital art or music

**How children use devices is the strongest predictor of emotional or social problems connected with screen addiction.** If you notice changes in your child during or after watching TV, playing video games, or online, consider a creating a media plan and talk with your child about your concerns.

### FAST FACTS

- Most American kids spend 3 hours a day watching TV
- Kids aged 6-12 are spending an average of 6 hours a day on-line
- Teens today are spending an average of 9 hours a day on-line

Screen addiction: Tech devices are designed to increase pleasure in the user by releasing dopamine, the “feel good” chemical naturally produced in our bodies. Unchecked use of tech devices can mimic other addictions, such as drug or gambling addiction.

## TIPS FOR DECREASING SCREEN TIME IN YOUNGER CHILDREN

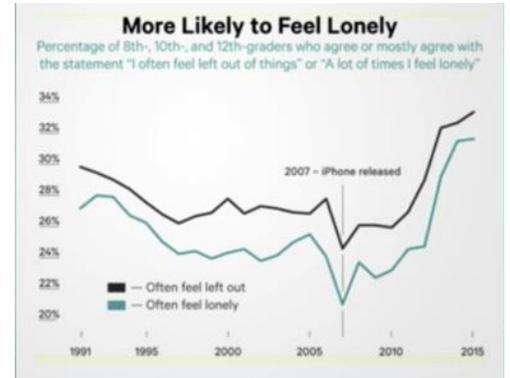
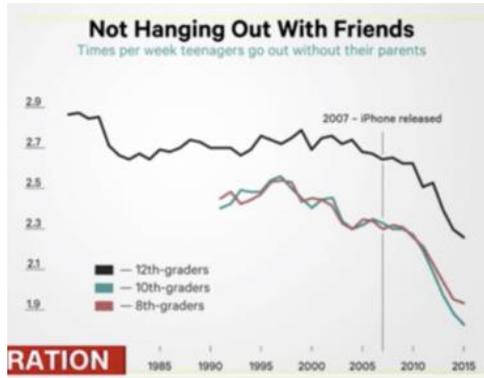
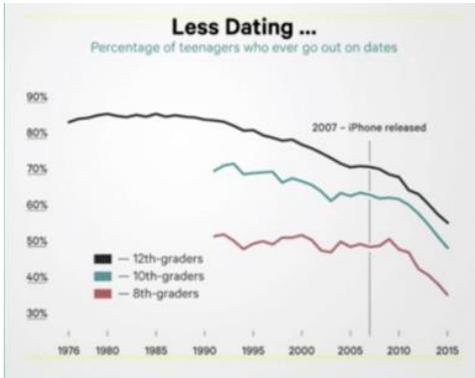
Review & Choose	When your child asks to play a game or download an app, take a look first to see if it is age and developmentally appropriate
No screens before bed	Kids need at least 1 hour of non-screen time for their brains to settle into “rest” mode for a healthy sleep and wake cycle
Turn off the TV if no one is watching it	“Background” TV can be a distraction and has been shown to get in the way of parents talking and interacting with their kids
Enjoy other types of media with your kids	Reading with your kids is one of the best ways to bond and share experiences with your child
Your kids are watching you	It helps to create a “screen-free” family media plan. When your child sees you engaging in other activities, they learn to explore and have other experiences too.

## TIPS FOR DECREASING SCREEN TIME IN OLDER CHILDREN

Remove TV or computer from your child’s room
Do not allow TV viewing during meals or homework
Turn off the TV when not in use
Choose programs to watch ahead of time, make a viewing schedule
Introduce other activities – board games, outdoor hikes, run errands together
Keep a “tech log” of how much time the family is spending in front of a screen
Be a good role model. Decrease your own screen time to 2 hours per day.
Consider using an app to monitor and control screen time
Have a “screen-free” week!

### Screen time and Mental Health

Researcher Jean Twenge, has looked closely at the link between the release of the iPhone and teen behavioral & mental health.



SOURCE: Increases in Depressive Symptoms, Suicide Related Outcomes and Suicide Rates Among US Adolescents after 2010 and links to Increased New Media Screen Time

## RESOURCES

### American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/Media-and-Children.aspx>

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162591>

### Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

### Mayo Clinic

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/screen-time/art-20047952>

### New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/10/health/screen-time-kids-psychology.html>

*Portions of this tip sheet were adapted from the listed resources*

Parenting for Prevention is a Decisions at Every Turn Coalition educational series for parents and other caring adults to increase awareness and knowledge about important youth issues and to encourage dialogue about making healthy choices.

Please visit <http://www.AshlandDecisions.org/parent-tip-sheets.html> for our complete library of tip sheets.

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