

SCREENTIME

What is the recommended screen time for Australian kids?

Recommended screen time in Australia is based on the [The Australian National Physical activity and sedentary guidelines](#):

- Under 2 years old – ZERO screen time (including watching television, electronic media, DVD's, computers and electronic games).
- 2-5 years – Less than 1 hour p/day.
- 5-17 years – Less than two hours p/day.

Let's face it, increased screen time is something we all face and while Australian guidelines for screen time for kids was based on passive watching, the actual screen time usage is increasing rapidly as the online world becomes part of socialising, education and general living. The figures above also do not take into account screentime for educational use and with more and more schools taking learning online this screen time will only be increasing.



Take a look at the recent snapshot from the Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner on screen use: [Research insights](#) and [infographic](#) on what kids are doing online

What are some good guidelines to follow?

Striking a balance, having a set of expectations and even a family plan for screen use are positive ways to start to navigate screen time use for kids. Screen time and usage will be different from family to family and again different for the ages of your children.

For younger kids:

- Install parental controls so what they are accessing is appropriate
- Only use age-appropriate sites with high learning potential and not games.
- Bookmark favourite sites you have introduced your child too so they only go to the sites they are interested in
- Sit with kids so you can explain how you are navigating and what they seeing.
- Always have the device in an area where you are so you are able to see what they are doing
- Put a time limit on your sessions, instilling the idea of developing a balance to tech use early
- Avoid just-before-bed computer time as it can be stimulating and interrupt sleep.

For teens:

Most important – Kids model their behaviour of tech from what they see and the boundaries around screen time that is the family norm. Setting up good family guidelines around tech use early very much helps in later years.

How much is too much?

It's sometimes hard to know whether your child's increased online time and changes in behaviour are just developmental or whether there is a problem. Usually if you are observing that online time is interfering with other aspects of your or your child's life, then its time for a discussion about expectations and time limits. Some behaviour changes to look out for:

- general health and wellbeing neglected or reduced personal hygiene
- isolated or withdrawn for long periods of time
- appearing anxious or irritable when away from the computer
- ongoing headaches, eye strain, sleep disturbance, excessive tiredness
- obsession with particular websites or games
- anger when being asked to take a break from online activity, negative changes in behaviour and declined interest in social activities like meeting friends or playing sport
- a decline in academic performance and failing to complete schoolwork

Some parent tips for screentime



How much is too much time?

Source: Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner

Some infographics from the Office of the Children's e-Safety Commissioner:

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner

Keeping an eye on screen time

Are your kids constantly glued to a screen? Where do you draw the line to keep screen time in check? This quick guide can help parents manage screen time.

What is screen time?

Screen time is the amount of time spent watching a screen or electronic media for entertainment. It includes:

- Watching TV
- Watching DVDs & other online shows
- Using computers or other devices to access online entertainment
- Playing games on consoles, computers and mobile phones
- Texting

Screen time does not include time spent on educational activities, such as for school work.

What is the right amount of screen time?

We know parents are time-poor, dealing with work and other life pressures, so screen time can be an easy alternative for keeping kids occupied. But what is recommended?

Health experts suggest these screen time limits:

Ages 0-2 No Screen time	Ages 2-5 Less than 1 hour per day	Ages 5-17 Less than 2 hours per day
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Source: Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines

Is too much screen time a risk?

It is important that parents help their children enjoy a mix of entertainment and social activities. Excessive screen time may lead to problems such as:

- Increased risk of obesity
- sleep difficulties
- Poor performance at school

But not all screen time is bad

Screens are a part of family life and when used in moderation can offer positive benefits, like:

- Enhancing learning experiences
- Facilitating social interaction
- Improving motor skills, coordination, literacy and numeracy

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8 tips to keep on top of your child's screen time

- Lead by example – reduce your own screen time.
- Plan screen-free time, like outdoor play, music and sport.
- Agree on daily screen time limits. It's not punishment, it's about keeping a balance.
- Be involved – watch TV and play games together.
- Start with small reductions to help lessen any resistance.
- Use tech tools to manage access, such as parental controls.
- Set tech-free zones and times at home – e.g. all screens off in bedrooms after a specified time.
- Resist giving mobile devices to children when going out – take books or toys instead.

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