

Screen Time and Your Developing Child Information for Parents

Tablets, mobile 'phones, TVs, laptops and computer games consoles are everywhere and most of us couldn't do without them!

We all know that allowing your child screen time sometimes feels like the only way parents can get things done. Giving your child access to a tablet or phone is often a surefire way of keeping them happy and busy whilst you get on with other things.

But did you know that too much Screen Time could have an impact on your child's language development?

What is Screen Time?

Screen time refers to any time that your child spends looking at anything with a screen including a television, smart phone, tablet, computer, games console or even the DVD player in the car.



Using technology prepares children for the future – so what's the problem?

Children will get the best out of technology if they have strong language skills to start with.

Children learn to talk and communicate by interacting with parents and other people in their life. This development happens in the very early years of life and involves watching faces, hearing talk about what is going on around them and taking turns to make sounds and words with an interested adult.

These turn-taking interactions form the basis for conversation as children develop. Tuning into other people at an early age also helps develop attention and social skills.

The more opportunities babies and children get to interact with an interested adult, the more opportunities there are to develop language and communication.

So, too much screen time can limit the amount of interactive time a child has with an adult and this has an impact on the amount of talk they can hear and join in with.



What about adults use of devices?

Who could manage without their mobile phone? It helps us keep in touch with friends, family and know what is going on in the world. There are so many positives in our use of technology! But be aware of the impact of your use of technology around young children – are you more distracted and less tuned into your child and their needs when focussing on your phone?



Ideas for safe Screen Time at home

- Sit with your child and **share the screen** and talk about what they are doing or seeing.
- **Talk about** what your child saw on screen in your everyday activities.
- **Set limits** on the amount of time young children access screens – this might be a challenge to start with but most little children prefer time with their parents playing, exploring and doing physical activities!
- **Reading a book together** is better than any app for child's language development.
- **Switch off and unplug devices** and TVs when they are not in use – background noise can impact on listening skills and children will be easily distracted by TV programmes even if the sound is turned down.
- **Think about YOUR phone behaviour!** Everyday activities like helping your baby and child with bathing or feeding, eating out, sitting on the bus, playing in the garden provide opportunities for you to talk and interact together. If you are always looking at your phone, you are less likely to be looking at your baby or child.

