

# Supporting your Child's Mental Wellness: Screen Use for Children aged 0-4

<sup>1</sup>(Canadian Pediatric Society, 2022)

## Canadian Pediatric Society Guidelines

### Children ages 0-2

**Screen time is not recommended<sup>1</sup>**

Video calling with loved ones can be a great way to stay connected.

### Children ages 2-5

**Less than 1 hour per day** of screen time<sup>1</sup>

**Young children learn best from face-to-face interactions** with caring adults. It's best to keep their screen time to a minimum.

### Family Media Plan

- As a family, consider developing a **family media plan** to guide when, how and where screens can—and can't—be used.
- Consider your child's unique characteristics, family values, and how they respond to media when making the plan. Regularly review the plan as your child grows older.
- Include your own screen guidelines as part of the family plan, and **consider how you can role model healthy tech use.**

In the early years, **risks of screen use** include<sup>1</sup>:

- delayed language development
- reduced attention, working memory, and impulse-control
- lower reading abilities
- missed opportunities for connection with loved ones
- nearsightedness
- sleep deprivation
- less time outdoors and reduced fundamental movement skills

**Setting limits when children are young is easier than cutting back when they're older.**

! There is **no evidence** to suggest that introducing technology at an early age improves your child's development.<sup>1</sup>



# Follow the 4 C's for some evidence-based tips to manage your child's screen use<sup>1 2</sup>:

<sup>2</sup>(American Association of Pediatrics, 2024)

## 1) Communicate- Be present and engaged when screens are used and, whenever possible, co-view content with children.

- Toddlers and preschoolers understand a lot of our language, so this is a good time to **talk to them about what they see** in videos, advertisements or behaviour of characters.
- If your child is watching something, talk about it. Do something related to the show or movie with your child.

## 2) Content- Prioritize face to face activities over screen-time.

- Children two years and up may benefit from high-quality educational programs. You can **try using tools**, like [Common Sense Media](#) or [Plugged-In](#), to find out what shows are the right fit.
- If using a platform like YouTube, select videos for your child rather than giving them full access to the device. Try turning off autoplay to avoid having videos you have not chosen popping up.



[Plugged-In](#)



## 3) Calm- Teach your child coping mechanisms for big emotions that do not involve devices.

- This article lists some pediatrician-recommended [parenting strategies](#) you could try.
- If using screens, keep them for regular times of day or for long car/bus/plane rides.
- **Support kids to settle their bodies for sleep by putting devices away at least 1 hour before bedtime.** Focus on a calming bedtime routine with activities like reading and snuggling.

## 4) Crowding Out- At this age, screens may crowd out playing, moving their body, running around outside, exploring nature, looking at books, and chatting with siblings and adult caregivers.

- All of these activities teach social and brain skills that help set toddlers up for success in preschool and kindergarten.
- Turn off screens when not in use and avoid background TV. **Build screen-free time into your family routines**, like at family meals or when reading a story.