

Balancing screen time

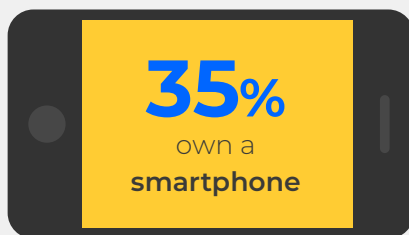
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Top tips to support children aged 7-11 (Key stage 2)

Typically at this age children will start to be more active online so it's important to equip them with the tools to strike a healthy balance between the time they spend on and offline, especially as they start to get their own devices.

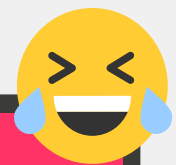


How are children using screens?



74%
play games online for
nearly **10 hours** a week

93%
are online almost
13.5 hours a week



**Nearly
8 out of 10**
of 8- 11s use YouTube to watch
cartoons, funny videos and
music videos

Source: [Ofcom Children and Parents
Media use and attitudes report 2018](#)

What parents tell us

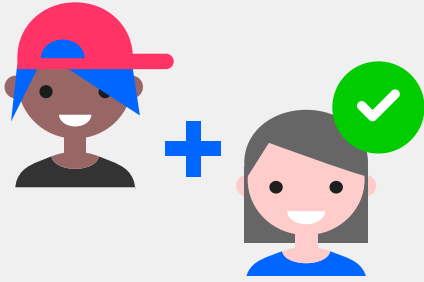
Screens are good for creativity

Nearly 7 out of 10 parents believe that using devices gives children another way of being creative for example a child who enjoys dancing, sharing a new routine online with family and friends.

Screens' impact on physical wellbeing

Nearly half of parents in the UK are worried their children are spending too much time online – with the majority believing it is causing their kids to lead a sedentary lifestyle lacking in physical exercise.

What are the benefits and challenges of screen use?



Screen time benefits

- Screen use provides a range of opportunities for creativity and learning – **70% of parents strongly agree that using devices is essential** for their child's development

Source: *Internet Matters Look both ways report.*

- Screens can be a great tool to allow children to **maintain relationships** with family and friends.
- **Screens can provide much needed down-time** at the end of the school day.

Screen time challenges

- **Peer pressure from friends to stay online** and the way certain platforms are developed to keep users engaged can make it harder for children to switch off.
- As children get more active online there is an **increased risk that they might stumble across inappropriate content** that can have a negative impact on their digital wellbeing.
- Long periods of passive screen time (i.e bingeing on box sets) **could have a physical effect on their development** (i.e. eyes, brain), sleep cycle and behaviour.



5 top tips to balance screen time

1 Create screen time rules together

To help them stick to digital boundaries **get them involved in the process of setting simple rules** on how they should use screens in and out of the home.

Giving them reasons why it's important to prioritise sleep, homework and family time can help them make smarter choices about when and how they should switch off screens.

Make sure to model the behaviour that you'd like to see in them – children tend to do what you do, not necessarily what you say.

2 Take an active role in their digital life

Get engaged and stay engaged in their digital life as they grow. The more you get involved and understand the things your children do online, the easier it is to gain their respect and influence what they do in their digital world.

Making screens part of family time, like a movie or an online games night is one way to make it more inclusive and engaging.

Also, encouraging them to have a healthy mix of screen activities that encourage creativity, learning & education, connecting with family & friends, as well as using devices for downtime is important.

3 Equip them with know-how to manage risks online

As children become more active online, **have regular conversations with them about ways to deal with a range of risks** that they may be exposed to such as seeing inappropriate content or being cyberbullied.

Make sure they know when and where to seek help if they need it and what tools they can use to deal with it.

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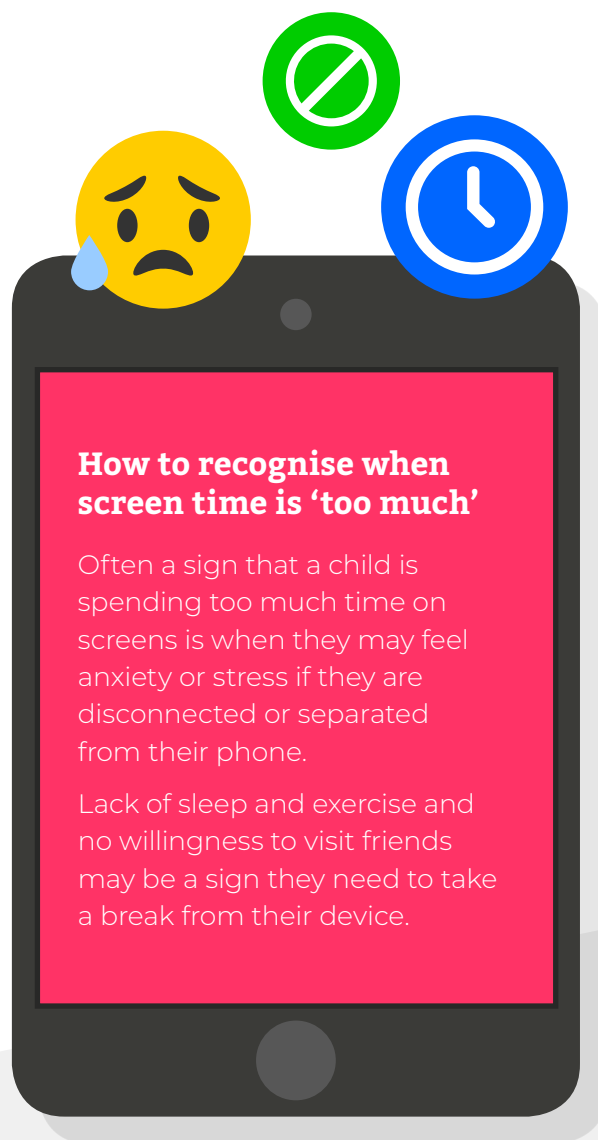
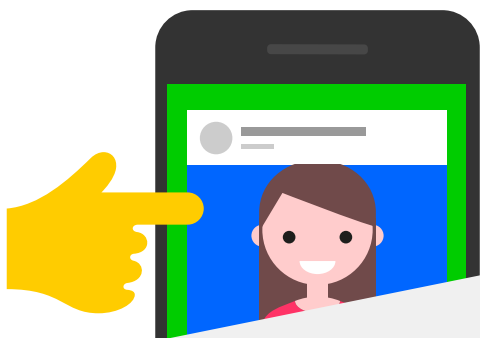
Use tools to manage their screen time & access to media

Whatever device your child uses, be sure to **make use of free and premium tools available** to manage their access to age-appropriate content and review the time they spend on specific online activities.

5

Encourage them to be selective about what they do online

Help them avoid mindless scrolling and be more critical about the media they watch and the platforms they use. Encourage them to explore apps and websites that will compliment what they enjoy in the real world and develop their key skills.



How to recognise when screen time is 'too much'

Often a sign that a child is spending too much time on screens is when they may feel anxiety or stress if they are disconnected or separated from their phone.

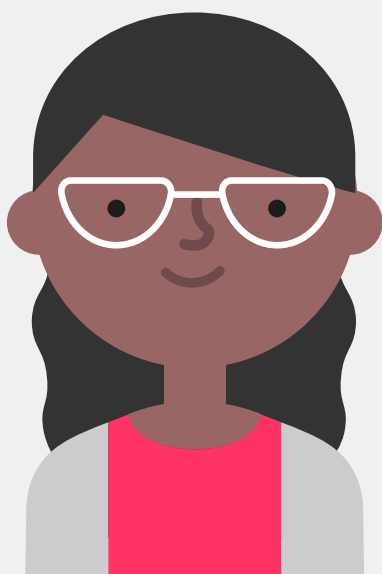
Lack of sleep and exercise and no willingness to visit friends may be a sign they need to take a break from their device.

The truth about screen time

Not all screen time is created equal so it's important to encourage children to have a healthy balance between passive screen time (i.e watching YouTube) and interactive screen time (i.e. creating content or playing games online).

There is no safe level of screen time but it doesn't mean that all screen time is harmful. Lack of evidence has meant that experts have found it hard to recommend a cut-off for children screen time overall.

One size does not fit all when it comes to screen time – it's more about getting it right for your families needs.



Visit internetmatters.org/screentime for more advice

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