

Screen time guidance for parents and carers

Screen time can negatively affect children's health, wellbeing, behaviour, and development. This can include problems with sleep, language development, concentration, mood, learning, and potential exposure to harmful online content, including the risk of radicalisation.

Here are some good tips for healthy behaviour.

General principles

- Less screen time is better.
- The later a child starts using devices, the better.
- If screens are used, bigger screens (like TVs) are better than smaller screens (like phones), because they are less addictive and easier to supervise.
- Avoid AI for young children – including chatbots, toys, and tools.
- Lead by example – be mindful of your own screen use in front of children.
- Watching things as a family is better than letting children watch alone.

Recommended maximum daily screen time (World Health Organisation guidelines)

These limits include *all* screens: TVs, tablets, computers, smartphones, smartwatches, and video games.

- **Ages 0–2:** No screen time other than for shared activities that encourage bonding, interaction and conversation (e.g. video calls with family, watching slow-paced, appropriate television shows together as a family)
- **Ages 2–5:** Maximum of 1 hour per day - Ideally less than 30 minutes.
- **Ages 5–12:** Maximum of 2 hours per day.

Healthy habits for all ages

- **Avoid screens before bed** – screen time can disrupt sleep.
- **Avoid screens immediately after waking up** – this can affect your brain's natural wake-up patterns.
- **Have screen-free areas** – children often understand limits on space better than limits on time. It's good to keep areas where children (and adults) sleep, eat, or play free of screens, and to minimise screen use when outdoors.
- **Avoid short-form, fast-paced videos** such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, as they can affect attention, behaviour, and self-regulation. This is particularly important for children, whose brains are not designed to process information this quickly.
- **Avoid using screen time to soothe tantrums, or to reward or punish a child**

Phones and social media

- Children should not have a smartphone before age 14.
- Children should not use social media before age 16.

For more information, please see [the Government's baby and toddler screen time guidance](#), [Haringey Council's staying safe online webpage](#), and the [NSPCC guide to keeping children safe online](#).