



Healthy Screen Time: Key Guidance for Parents (Ages 4–7)

1. Focus on Balance, Not Just Time

- There is **no single “right” amount of screen time**—quality matters as much as quantity. Healthy screen activities include learning, creativity, and communicating with family/friends.
- Ensure screen use does **not replace sleep, physical activity, meals, or realworld play**. <https://www.childnet.com/help-and-advice/screen-time-boundaries-parents/>

Passive screen use:

- Watching TV alone
- Viewing pre-recorded videos without interaction
- Background TV

Interactive screen use:

- Video calls with family
- Live storytelling over video
- Co-viewing and discussing content
- Educational apps that encourage engagement

2. Practical Boundaries That Work

- Agree **family screen rules together** (e.g., screenfree bedrooms, screenfree mealtimes). Review rules as children grow.
- Keep screens **out of bedrooms at night** and aim for **offline time before bed** to support healthy sleep.
- Avoid using **screens as rewards**—this makes children want them more. <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/screen-time-online-harms-resources-members>

3. AgeAppropriate Guidance

- **Under 2:** No screen time except video calls.
- **Ages 2–5:** Keep to **30 minutes a day**, ideally on larger screens to reduce eye strain. Avoid quickfire short videos which affect concentration. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day/5-a-day-what-counts/>
- **Ages 6–10:** Recommended **1–2 hours per day**, with none in the hour before bed and none in the first hour after waking. [Managing your family's screentime | For You | Health for Under 5s](#)

4. Watch for Signs of Too Much Screen Time

- Sore eyes, headaches, irritability, poor sleep, restlessness or difficulty concentrating can be warning signs. <https://saferinternet.org.uk/resource/screen-time-boundaries>
- For children with SEND, a report cited on this website concluded that **screen time can** be associated with declining working memory, processing, attention levels and language skills in children. <https://send-network.co.uk/posts/screen-time-how-it-impacts-the-wellbeing-and-learning-of-children-with-send>

5. Support Healthy Digital Habits

- Encourage a **mix of activities:** outdoor play, reading, creative hobbies and shared family time.

- Use **parental control tools** (e.g., screentime limits, disabling autoplay, content filters). [Use Parental Controls to Keep Your Child Safe | NSPCC](#)
- Stay involved—ask children what they’re doing online and **coview content** when possible. <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/parents-and-carers>

6. Emotional Wellbeing Matters

- Using screens as “pacifiers” can make emotional regulation harder over time, especially for younger children and those with SEND. [\[apa.org\]](#) Prioritise **facetoface conversation**, as screens can displace vital language-building interactions.