

CHILDREN'S SCREEN TIME AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT



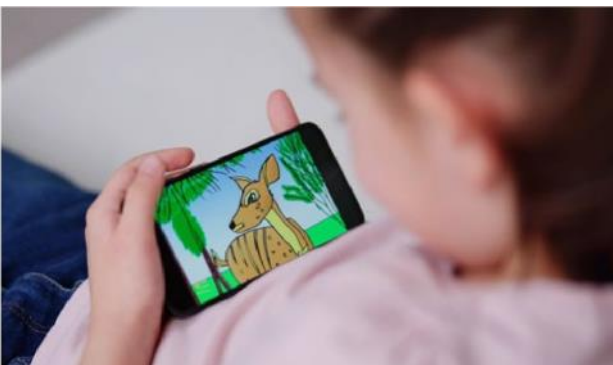
This guide provides information on the effects of screen time on a child's language development and tips on how to manage screen time.

How does language develop?

Children learn language through interaction with other people. One way to promote language development is for a child and their parent to share the same object of attention (e.g. browse through a book, talk about a toy). Language development is also supported by the parent responding to the child's initiatives to communicate and speaking in a way that is child-centred and suited to the child's abilities.

Children also need adults to provide them with linguistically rich models to learn new words, for example. When a parent reads a book to their child and looks at pictures in books with the child, the child learns a wide variety of vocabulary, sentences and language structures.

Screen time can, in the worst case, interfere



with or reduce these important face-to-face interactions. As a result, the child does not get the practice and linguistic model that they need for social situations.

Impact of screen time on language development

Children's screen time:

Extensive screen time for children can be detrimental to their language development. The younger a child starts using digital devices, the greater the impact screen time can have on their language skills.

WHY?

- The child has fewer opportunities for face-to-face interaction with adults.
- Excessive screen time can prevent the child from experiencing normal everyday events and observing the environment.
- Learning from a screen is not as effective as face-to-face learning. It is particularly difficult for children under the age of two to learn new things from a screen.
- Screen time can also have an effect on children's concentration, self-regulation and social skills. These are linked to language development.



Parents' screen time:

The more parents use digital devices, the more likely it is that their child will have a lot of screen time.

Parents' own screen time, such as phone use, can interfere with and reduce parent-child interaction and thus affect their child's language development.

WHY?

- Parents set an example for screen time and establish screen use habits in the home.
 - If a parent is focused on a screen, they will not naturally pay attention to their child or the child's initiatives.

Shared screen time:

Screen time with a parent reduces the harmful effects of screen time.

When it comes to older children, shared screen time may even contribute to, for example, learning new words.

WHY?

- The benefits are based on the parent watching a programme together with their child and actively verbalising and connecting the events on the screen to the real world, either in the moment or once the programme has ended.
- Age-appropriate and educational programmes may motivate the child to learn new things.

Recommendations on screen time:

- **Children aged 0 to 2:** No screen time at all.
- **Children under school age:** As late a start as possible. No more than one hour a day of age-appropriate programmes and games. With a parent as far as possible.
- **Children of primary school age:** No more than two hours a day of age-appropriate programmes and games, but even that may be too much. It is advisable for parents to monitor their child's behaviour after the screen time is over. If screen time causes, for example, restlessness or irritability, it is a good idea to reduce it.



Tips for using and managing screen time:

1. Take time off from screens. The use of screens should be avoided, for example, during morning and evening activities, mealtimes and daily journeys.
2. Whenever possible, screen time should be shared with a parent. Discuss the contents with your child and help them understand what they see on the screen.
3. Watch programmes either in your home language or in the language of your child's day-care centre or school. A child under school age should not listen to, for example, English on the screen unless it is a language used in the family.
4. The adult should choose the contents of the screen time according to the child's age. The television is a better option than mobile devices because the contents can be better controlled.
5. Avoid watching short videos (e.g. video clips on YouTube or social network channels). They are, on average, the worst possible content for a growing child.
6. As a parent, reflect on your own screen time and habits.
7. Avoid using digital devices to soothe and distract from emotions and challenging behaviour (e.g. anger, boredom, having to wait, taking a toy from another person). Doing this will not allow the child to get practice, for example in regulating emotions or sharing toys with others.
8. Replace screen time with normal everyday activities (cooking, cleaning, going to the shops), going outdoors, exercising, drawing, playing, observing the environment when travelling and talking about what you see.

