

Screen Time Tips

The Australian Government currently recommends no screen time for children under the age of 2 years and limits of one hour a day for children aged 2-5 years. While less is always best for young children's brain development, we know it can be difficult for many families to follow these guidelines when technology and screens are embedded in our daily lives.

To help South Australian families find the balance that works for them, we've collected the top five tips for making screen time healthier, from the experts at Telethon Kids Institute.

1 If no one's watching, turn it off.

Lots of families like to leave the TV on in the background, but if no one is watching turn it off as young children find it difficult to focus on what they are meant to be doing if the screen is on around them. If you want to fill the silence, try putting on the radio or music instead.

2 Make screen time interactive.

Next time the screen goes on, use it as an opportunity to talk or sing along with your child. This is called 'interactive co-viewing' where you use the content on a screen to interact with your child. This helps them translate what is happening on the screen into real life and also boosts the back-and-forth interactions over the day.

3 Try and avoid screen time with mealtime.

Family mealtime is a great opportunity to build connection and interact with your child, this is the case for breastfeeding and bottle-feeding child too. As children get older, research has found eating while a screen is on leads to poorer nutrition habits, but these behaviours begin very early in life. If you're a family who often has the screen on, start slow and try turning the screen off for just one meal and gradually increase as your family learns the new routine.

4 Choose your content carefully.

In the age of streaming platforms, mobile devices with internet access, and almost infinite choices when it comes to children's content, it is only natural that parents feel overwhelmed and unsure when it comes to choosing appropriate content. We recommend sticking with platforms like ABC Kids that continue to develop high-quality educational content. Another option is to make use of freely available websites like [Children and Media Australia](#) or [Common Sense Media](#), which provide helpful reviews on children's television, movies and apps.

5 Set boundaries early and follow them yourself.

Young children need boundaries in many aspects of their life to help provide predictable routines, ensure they feel safe, and support them in growing in their own independence. Boundaries for screen time are no different. In fact, the earlier families can establish these boundaries and routines, the easier it will be to maintain them as your child grows up. We recommend starting off small when introducing new boundaries and planning for things that might make the change tough. In fact, modelling healthy screen time behaviours may be one of the most crucial things you can do with young children, who often want to copy what their parent or caregiver is doing.