

## Screen Sense Messages and Tips for Parents of Young Children

Adapted from *Screen Sense – Setting the Record Straight: Research-Based Guidelines for Screen Use for Children Under 3 Years Old*.  
Claire Lerner and Rachel Barr, Zero to Three, 2014.

What we know helps children learn:

- Positive parent-child relationships
- Quality learning experiences that promote:
  - ✓ Language
  - ✓ Exploration
  - ✓ Experimentation
  - ✓ Problem solving
  - ✓ Creative thinking
  - ✓ Social skills
- Opportunities to transfer learning (ability to apply information from a past experience to a new situation)

Excessive TV and screen exposure is associated with poorer language skills, cognitive outcomes, and ability to pay attention. TV and computer use are associated with increased food intake, decreased physical activity, and increased sleep problems.

Children learn half as much and forget more rapidly when they learn from a TV or touchscreen rather than a real person.

LIMIT YOUR OWN MEDIA USE WHEN YOU ARE WITH YOUR CHILDREN. More parent screen use leads to more negative child behaviours and angry parent responses.

NO BACKGROUND TV: Background TV is usually not child-directed and children can't make sense of it. It interferes with children's play and learning. When the TV is on in the background, parents don't interact with their children as much or as well. **\*\*Background TV is the most likely type of media to lead to negative outcomes. It can increase behaviours like clinginess, aggression, anxiety, etc.\*\***

SET LIMITS ON SCREEN TIME: Children *need* lots of time interacting with real people and exploring the real world. They don't *need* any screen time. Limit screen time to ½ to 1 hour per day.

NO SCREENS IN CHILDREN'S BEDROOMS or in the evening close to bedtime.

DON'T USE MOBILE DEVICES TO PACIFY CHILDREN, especially kids who are challenging. The parents' job is to teach children to handle emotions and adapt. There will likely be some tantrums on the way, and that's normal.

Content is important: Choose educational content (e.g. TVO, PBS children's programming), not entertainment content. Children cannot make sense of adult-directed content, and violent content has negative effects.

Context is important: Parental involvement with TV watching and screen use is important. Children can learn a lot more from screens if someone is participating with them, talking about what they are seeing and doing, and helping them to connect what they see on the screen to their real life experiences.

More information: [www.zerotothree.org/parentingresources/screensense](http://www.zerotothree.org/parentingresources/screensense)

