

# Managing Screen Time: Children, Parents and Families

Tower Hamlets Educational Psychology Service (THEPS)



## SCREEN TIME DEFINITION

Screen time can be defined as the amount of time a person spends in front of a "screen" e.g. desktop computer, laptop, mobile phone, tablet, television and video console.

Screens are an integral part of our daily lives and many of us cannot imagine life without them. Screen time is now also a part of modern day parenting and can be greatly enjoyable for children, parents and families however it can also be greatly problematic for children, parents and families.



## **GUIDELINES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Currently there are no government guidelines on screen time in the UK however **many health organisations across the world** have created their own guidelines, suggestions and recommendations to try to help children, parents and families manage screen time. However as each health organisation has its own viewpoint on screen time it can be confusing for parents and families.

For example:

- In the UK, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) suggests parents adjust their child's use of screens based on their developmental age and individual needs
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends no screen time for children under the age of 18 months
- The advice from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is that children should have TV-free days, or have 2 hour limits on the time spent in front of screens
- In Canada, the Canadian Paediatrics Society (CPS) recommends no screen time for children under 2 years old
- In America, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend discouraging the use of screen devices for children under 18 months (except for video chatting) and a maximum of 1 hour per day for children ages 2 to 5 years

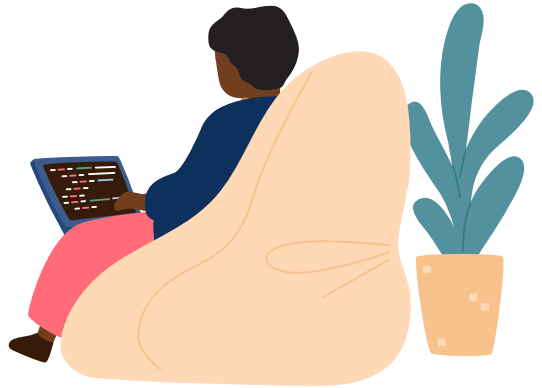
To help parents and families decide how best to manage screen time we suggest considering **5 key points and questions** using the acronym **F.A.C.E.D** (after all we are **F.A.C.E.D** with screens every day).

# F.A.C.E.D

**FREQUENCY - ALTERNATIVES - CONTENT - E SAFETY - DURATION**

## **F = FREQUENCY**

- How often is your child using a screen device e.g. daily, weekly and monthly?
- When is your child using a screen device?



## **A = ALTERNATIVES TO SCREEN TIME**

- What else could your child be doing if they were not using a screen device?
- For example, could they be drawing, exercising, painting, playing a board game?

## C = CONTENT

- What exactly is your child watching/listening to?
- Can it be watched or played together?
- To help transfer knowledge from screen time to real life can the content be spoken about afterwards watching or playing e.g. talk about the story, characters?



## E = E-SAFETY RULES

- Do you lock devices with a password/passcode?
- Are photos of your child/their identity protected online?
- Are your children only interacting with people they know when using screen time?
- Does your child/do you know what to do if they see something online that upsets/worries them?

## D = DURATION

- How much time does your child spend using a screen device in a day e.g. minutes, hours?
- Do you have limits in your home in relation to the amount time is spent on screens?



## MEDIA PLAN

Setting boundaries for screen time use is important. To support parents with **setting screen time boundaries** one suggestion is for parents to create a **Child/Family Media Plan** that sets out rules and expectations for the use of screen time in their family.

A family media plan can help to ensure screen time does not interfere with other important activities, like **getting enough sleep, healthy eating, play or exercise**.

When creating a Child/Family Media Plan it is helpful to consider **F.A.C.E.D.** Please see an example opposite.

The media plan can be visually appealing and include the use of visual cues e.g. using a visual timetable and a 'Now and Next' board can be especially useful when supporting younger children. Timers can also be useful for younger children or for children who have difficulty transitioning away from favorite activities, including screen time.



## **Child's/ Family's name Media Plan**

### **Screen devices are not allowed in the following screen free zones in our home:**

- Kitchen/dining room table
- Bedroom
- Bathroom

### **We will show good media manners by not looking at the screen during meal times or keeping under the table**

### **We will not use screen devices during the following times:**

- When walking in the park
- When walking down the street
- While at school
- During meal times

### **Screen devices will charge overnight in parent's bedroom**

### **Screen time for recreational use will be:**

- Age appropriate content
- Co-viewed (watching with a parent or an adult)
- Co-played (playing with a parent or an adult)
- Video chat with relatives
- Include creative or educational apps

### **By decreasing screen time, we will have more time for:**

- Being outside
- Board games
- Drawing
- Reading
- Sleeping

## TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Remember screen devices are not toys.
- Using electronic devices as a reward or punishment may inflate their importance for a child – try to avoid doing this.
- Remember screen time can be a shared experience i.e. watch together and comment on what your child is doing/ watching.
- Set times or areas in the home that are screen free e.g. bedrooms, dinner time.
- The blue light displayed by screen devices has been proven to have a negative effect on our eyes and quality of sleep therefore no screen use 30 minutes – 1 hour before bedtime is advised. To further combat the negative effects of blue light it is also advisable to set your family's screen devices in the evening to display a warm light or be set to night mode.
- Think about your own screen time habits. Are you distracted by your phone when spending time with your child?

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:

[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

[www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

[www.nhs.uk/news/pregnancy-and-child/who-guidelines-screen-time](http://www.nhs.uk/news/pregnancy-and-child/who-guidelines-screen-time)

[www.parentzone.org](http://www.parentzone.org)

[www.rcpch.ac.uk](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk)

For further information or guidance please feel free to discuss with your Children's Centre Educational Psychologist, School Educational Psychologist or the Educational Psychology Service.

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