

MANAGING SCREEN TIME AT HOME:

PLAN DON'T BAN!

Establish firm rules about what, when, where, with whom and how much time your child can spend with screens. Do this in consultation with your child and set realistic and achievable limits for best results.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Find high-quality, age-appropriate content. What your child does with technology is more critical than obsessing over 'how much' time they spend plugged-in. Is it leisure or learning? Are they active or passive? Is it age appropriate? The Australian Council on Children and the Media, have some great review tools ([movie reviews](#) and [app reviews](#)), as do [Common Sense Media](#) (who review apps, games, websites, movies).

USE INTERNET FILTERS

Filtering software is great to ensure kids aren't accessing inappropriate content when you're not around to physically supervise them. [The Family Zone](#), for example, allows you to restrict what content kids can download and access on devices, but it also helps to enforce limits on the amount of time kids can access and when they can use devices (this is especially helpful for working parents, or for kids who have their 'own' devices).

ESTABLISH CUT OFF POINTS OR TIME

Rather than prescribing an amount of 'screen time', give kids precise quantities and clear cut-off points. For example, tell them: "You can play two NBA games" or "You can watch two episodes of your favourite show on Netflix".

PRIME TO PREVENT

Give kids and teens ample warnings before their screen-time will end. This is called 'cognitive priming' and these simple verbal reminders allow kids to prepare themselves for the end of screen-time. This can prevent the dreaded techno-tantrum.

ESTABLISH TECH-FREE ZONES AT HOME

Ideally, kids should use screens in publicly-accessible parts of the house like the kitchen or dining room. A recommendation is that bedrooms, bathrooms, meal zones and play areas should be tech-free.

CROWD OUT SCREEN TIME

Plan daily tech-free activities, especially during the holidays, where kids are engaged in physical activity. Maybe a bush walk, soccer camp, kick to kick at the park, interacting with friends or a project of interest such as cooking or craft. Kids more than ever, need 'green time', time in nature, so ensure they have plenty of time outdoors (this helps with their self-regulation skills, eye health, mental well-being and also helps to regulate their circadian rhythms which assists their sleep).

AVOID DIGITAL STICKS AND CARROTS

Try to avoid using screen-time as a reward or punishment tool. Using screen-time as a 'digital carrot' to reward good behaviour, or for completing chores (or to threaten children for inappropriate behaviour) only works in the short-term and can have negative long-term consequences. (For example, we know kids are unlikely to report cyber-bullying to parents if there's a threat of 'digital amputation').

HOWEVER... if your children have completed their agreed home /school commitments, you may feel it is possible for them to have some screen time. This should always be seen as managing their time well and sticking to the agreed plan, rather than being a reward.

If the agreed plan falls in a heap and screen time has been withdrawn or reduced, ensure that the child sees this as his doing rather than a punishment.