

Children and Media: Tips for Parents

Article By: American Academy of Pediatrics

Media literacy is an important skill for children to learn. Some parents might have a hard time deciding where to draw the line between encouraging education and overuse. The following article offers some great tips for parents on how to encourage media literacy while at the same time limiting its use.

In a world where children are "growing up digital," it's important to help them learn healthy concepts of digital use and citizenship. Parents play an important role in teaching these skills. Here are a few tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help parents manage the digital landscape they're exploring with their children.

The following health and safety tips are from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Treat media as you would any other environment in your child's life

The same parenting guidelines apply in both real and virtual environments. Set limits; kids need and expect them. Know your children's friends, both online and off. Know what platforms, software, and apps your children are using, where they are going on the web, and what they are doing online.

Set limits and encourage playtime

Tech use, like all other activities, should have reasonable limits. Unstructured and offline play stimulates creativity. Make unplugged playtime a daily priority, especially for very young children. And — don't forget to join your children in unplugged play whenever you're able.

Families who play together, learn together

Family participation is also great for media activities — it encourages social interactions, bonding, and learning. Play a video game with your kids. It's a good way to demonstrate good sportsmanship and gaming etiquette. And, you can introduce and share your own life experiences and perspectives — and guidance — as you **play the game**.

Be a good role model

Teach and model kindness and good manners online. And, because children are great mimics, limit your own media use. In fact, you'll be more available for and connected with your children if you're interacting, hugging and playing with them rather than simply staring at a screen.



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Know the value of face-to-face communication

Very young children learn best through two-way communication. Engaging in back-and-forth "talk time" is critical for language development. Conversations can be face-to-face or, if necessary, by video chat, with a traveling parent or far-away grandparent. Research has shown that it's that "back-and-forth conversation" that improves language skills — much more so than "passive" listening or one-way interaction with a screen.

Create tech-free zones

Keep family mealtimes and other family and social gatherings tech-free. Recharge devices overnight — outside your child's bedroom to help children avoid the temptation to use them when they should be sleeping. These changes encourage more family time, healthier eating habits, and better sleep, all critical for children's wellness.

Don't use technology as an emotional pacifier

Media can be very effective in keeping kids calm and quiet, but it should not be the only way they learn to calm down. Children need to be taught how to identify and handle strong emotions, come up with activities to manage boredom, or calm down through breathing, talking about ways to solve the problem, and finding other strategies for channeling emotions.

Apps for kids: do your homework

More than 80,000 apps are labeled as educational, but little research has demonstrated their actual quality. Products pitched as "interactive" should require more than "pushing and swiping." Look to organizations like [Common Sense Media](#) for reviews about age-appropriate apps, games and programs to guide you in making the best choices for your children.

It's okay for your teen to be online

Online relationships are part of typical adolescent development. Social media can support teens as they explore and discover more about themselves and their place in the grown-up world. Just be sure your teen is behaving appropriately in both the real and online worlds. Many teens need to be reminded that a platform's privacy settings do not make things actually "private" and that images, thoughts, and behaviors teens share online will instantly become a part of their digital footprint indefinitely. Keep lines of communication open and let them know you're there if they have questions or concerns.

Remember — kids will be kids

Kids will make mistakes using media. Try to handle errors with empathy and turn a mistake into a teachable moment. But some indiscretions, such as sexting, bullying, or posting self-harm images, may be a red flag that hints at trouble ahead. Parents should take a closer look at your child's behaviors and, if needed, enlist supportive professional help, including from your pediatrician.

Media and digital devices are an integral part of our world today. The benefits of these devices, if used moderately and appropriately, can be great. But, research has shown that face-to-face time with family, friends, and teachers, plays a pivotal and even more important role in promoting children's learning and healthy development. Keep the face-to-face up front, and don't let it get lost behind a stream of media and tech.

American Academy of Pediatrics: Updated Recommendations (October 2016)

- Avoid digital media use (except video-chatting) in children younger than 18 to 24 months.
- For children ages 18 to 24 months of age, if you want to introduce digital media, choose high-quality programming and use media together with your child. Avoid solo media use in this age group.

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- For children 2 to 5 years of age, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programming, co-view with your children, help children understand what they are seeing, and help them apply what they learn to the world around them.
- Avoid fast-paced programs (young children do not understand them as well), apps with lots of distracting content, and any violent content.
- Turn off televisions and other devices when not in use.
- Avoid using media as the only way to calm your child. Although there are intermittent times (e.g., medical procedures, airplane flights) when media is useful as a soothing strategy, there is concern that using media as strategy to calm could lead to problems with limit setting or the inability of children to develop their own emotion regulation. Ask your pediatrician for help if needed.
- Monitor children's media content and what apps are used or downloaded. Test apps before the child uses them, play together, and ask the child what he or she thinks about the app.
- Keep bedrooms, mealtimes, and parent-child playtimes screen free for children and parents. Parents can set a "do not disturb" option on their phones during these times.
- No screens 1 hour before bedtime, and remove devices from bedrooms

Reference: American Academy of Pediatrics. *Children and Media: Tips for Parents* (2016). Retrieved on May 5, 2017, from: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/children-and-media-tips-parents>

Inspirational Quotes – Issue # 67

Edited by: Vicary Parkin

Throughout history, society has been influenced and shaped by the many great contributions made by individuals with learning disabilities. These people demonstrate the strength and perseverance to be true to themselves and strive for their full potential. We hope their words inspire and motivate you to reach for your true potential.

"When I was growing up, my mom always told me that I was smart even though I was called dumb in school because I have dyslexia. I was also a big girl who played sports and ate well, and she would tell me 'You're fit and healthy.' I was super-insecure at the time, but it helped to hear her words." – Ashley Graham, model

Ashley Graham is an American model, signed to Ford Models. First discovered by a modelling agency in 2010, she has made waves in the industry and has become one of the most well-known models in the industry today. She is a vocal supporter of the Health at Every Size initiative which encourages body positivity and health. In 2017, Graham made headlines as the first plus-sized model to be on the cover of both British and American editions of the fashion magazine *Vogue*.

In a recent interview in *Elle Magazine*, Graham gives a candid account of what it was like to grow up feeling different than her peers. She credits the support her mother gave her growing up as being an important factor in helping to develop the confidence she has today. She feels that having a learning disability has played a big role in who she is as a person today, and that working to overcome the adversity she has experienced in her life has made her stronger.

Reference: Laing, Sarah. Ashley Graham talks #effyourbodystandards. (2017) Retrieved Online: March 28, 2017. <http://www.ellecanada.com/culture/celebrity/article/exclusive-ashley-graham-talks-sex-confidence-and-effyourbodystandards>

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We hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the LD Edge Newsletter and that you are looking forward to the next issue.



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