

## **Beyond ‘turn it off’: How to advise families on media use**

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- **Media just another environment.** Kids continuing to do the things they do.
- **Parenting has not changed.** Same rules apply to real and virtual environments. Play with them. Set limits: kids need and expect them. Teach kindness. Be involved. Know their friends and where they are going.
- **Role modeling is critical.** Limit your own media use and model online etiquette. Attentive parenting requires face time away from screens.
- **We learn from each other.** Neuroscience research shows that very young children learn best via two-way communication. “Talk time” between caregiver and child remains critical for language development. Passive video presentations do not lead to language learning in infants and toddlers. The more media engender live interactions, the more educational value they may hold (toddler chatting by video with parent who is traveling). Optimal educational media opportunities begin after age 2, when media may play role in bridging the learning achievement gap.
- **Content matters.** Quality of content is more important than the platform or time spent with media. Prioritize how your child spends his time rather than just setting a timer.
- **Curation helps.** Little research validates the 80,000 apps labeled as educational. An interactive product requires more than “pushing and swiping” to teach. Look to organizations like Common Sense Media that review apps, games and programs.
- **Co-engagement counts.** Play a video game with your kids.
- **Playtime is important.** Unstructured playtime stimulates creativity. Prioritize daily unplugged playtime, especially for the very young.
- **Set limits.** Tech use like all other activities should have reasonable limits. Does your child’s technology use help or hinder participation in other activities.
- **It’s OK for your teen to be online.** Online relationships are integral to adolescent development. Social media can support identity formation. Teach your teen appropriate behaviors that apply in both the real and online worlds. Ask teens to demonstrate what they are doing online to help you understand both content and context.

- **Create tech-free zones.** Preserve family mealtime. Recharge devices overnight outside bedrooms. These actions encourage family time, healthier eating habits and sleep.
- **Kids will be kids.** Kids will make mistakes using media. These can be teachable moments if handled with empathy. Certain aberrations, however, such as sexting or posting self-harm images, signal a need to assess youths for other risk-taking behaviors.