



SCREEN USE

A BALANCED VIEW

As screen use rises, research shows that the reasons and context behind technology use matter. A balanced approach looks at how a child interacts with media, weighing both benefits and challenges to support daily participation.

WHY CHILDREN SEEK SCREENS

Children may seek screens for many reasons, including regulation, comfort, predictability, social connection, learning, and access to interests. Occupational therapists consider each child's individual sensory, emotional, and participation needs when supporting screen participation. Occupational therapists can also help families create balanced screen routines that support development, participation in daily activities, meaningful play, sleep, and overall well-being.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Attention

Family Routines

Sleep

Play

Emotional well-being

Physical activity

Social participation

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

Focus on Daily Balance: Blend standard screen use with offline activities, tech-free routines, and interactive media throughout the day.

Make Screen Time a Co-Occupation: Watch together and start conversations about the screen content.

Support Transitions: Explore strategies such as visual timers, device settings, or natural content closures (e.g., the end of a video) to help transition from screens.

IDEAS FOR BUILDING VARIETY INTO THE DAY

Active Play: Playground, obstacle courses, heavy work (e.g., jumping, climbing, crashing)

Sensory & Hands-On: Play-doh, sensory bins, slime, and cooking together

Create & Solve: Legos, building, puzzles, and coloring

Follow Their Lead: Explore your child's current unique interests

THE "BIG PICTURE" ON SCREENS

Screens are a valuable tool for regulation, learning, and comfort. There is no one-size-fits-all timeline. Focus on what works for your child's unique nervous system, using media to support connection and predictable routines alongside a variety of everyday experiences.

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