

Sharing screen time together

Rationale:

Watching television, DVDs or videos online can have educational benefits. For example, it can build your child's vocabulary. Screen time is best for your child when she watches it together with you. This is because your child learns best from interactive, hands-on experiences with people who care about her. Screen time is a 'sometimes' activity. It is just one of many activities to help with her learning.

Age range information

3-6 years

What you need

Look for programmes and videos designed for your child's age group that:

- Expose your child to new and familiar words.
- Encourage interaction, such as singing or responding to cues from the characters.
- Model friendly behaviour, like co-operation and treating others with respect, such as 'the wiggles' and 'bananas in pyjamas'.
- Lead and encourage imaginative play, such as 'mister maker'.
- Increase letter and number knowledge, and vocabulary, such as 'sesame street'.

Avoid adult programmes and videos directed at older children. These may have content that is scary or confusing for your child. Avoid watching content that contains a lot of advertising. Children do not always understand that advertisements are trying to sell them something. They can also leave them feeling unhappy about who they are and what they have.

How to do it

1. Decide what programmes you want your child to watch.
2. Choose a programme together – for example, let your child choose from a selection of entertaining and educational programmes that are appropriate for her age.
3. Sit and watch the programme with your child. Make sure she knows that you are looking forward to watching with her, rather than just checking that the programme or video is appropriate.
4. If the programme gives opportunities to respond – for example, singing along or answering a question – encourage your child to join in by joining in too.

5. Talk about what is happening on the show and explain things that might not be obvious. Encourage a response from your child – for example, ‘Why do you think she did that?’ or ‘What did you like best?’

Adapting for children of different ages

It is important for you to be there to talk to your younger child about what she is watching, because she is still learning the difference between reality and fantasy.

Your older child might be curious about or interested in programmes and videos that her older friends or siblings like. It is up to you to decide what is appropriate for your child to watch.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Calmer, easier, happier screen time: for parents of toddlers to teens - a guide to getting back in charge of technology](#)
- [Unplugged parenting: how to raise happy, healthy children in the digital age](#)
- [The art of screen time: how your family can balance digital media and real life](#)