

# ★ Sit Less and Limit Screen Time

## Ideas to make it happen

- Move it out.** Take the screens (TV, computer, game consoles, iPads, etc.) out of all bedrooms.
- Balance screen time and activity time.** Make it a family rule that minutes of screen time must equal minutes of physical activity. Want to watch that sitcom? First, go for a 30-minute walk. Looking forward to that weekly drama? Play outside for an hour, then kick back on that couch.
- Incorporate alternate activities.** Don't make limiting screen time a punishment. Choose to spend more time on hobbies, reading, playing games, and moving your body.
- Set limits.** Make a "family media plan." Say, "Don't watch TV on weekdays," or "No more than an hour each night — after homework." Set whatever limits work for you. The important thing is to have some limits, and stick to them.
- Use a timer.** One way to help limit your screen time is to use a timer. When the timer goes off, your screen time is up — no exceptions!
- Don't eat in front of the screens.** Take the set out of the kitchen, and don't allow food in the TV room. This allows you to be mindful while you eat.



- Don't surf. Schedule.** Decide in advance what shows you want to watch during the week. Turn the TV on ONLY when the show is on, and turn it off when the show is over.
- Make the most of TV time.** Use a treadmill or stationary bike while you watch shows. Do calisthenics during the commercial breaks. Watch TV standing up — while you do arm circles, knee bends, and leg lifts.
- Be aware.** Do you automatically turn the TV on when you come in the house? Does it stay on all the time, even if no one is watching it? Try to break these habits. Watch TV on purpose, not just because it's there.



## Why?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends limiting screen time to the following:

- No more than 1 to 2 hours a day for children 3 and older
- No screen time at all for children 2 years of age and younger

Kids will do what you do. If they see you on the phone or watching TV all the time, they will want to do the same. Model good behavior by limiting your own screen time and being present with your kids.

## Tips for TV-free tots

Tempted to use the TV as a babysitter while you get a few things done around the house? Here are some better ideas for the very young:

- **Let them “help” you cook, clean, and do laundry.** Have your little ones stir, pour, and mix food. Give them a sponge or baby wipe — and let them go to town. Let them help fold, match socks, or put away clothes.
- **Corral them.** Use baby gates or a playpen to keep little ones in a safe area while you cook or shower.
- **Play music, a podcast, or audio story.** Kids will often entertain themselves if they have a pleasant voice to listen to.
- **Keep it fresh.** Put some toys away for 1 to 2 weeks so they learn to use others to spark their imagination.

## Indoor, at-home activity options

- Play games like:
  - Duck Duck Goose
  - Balloon volleyball
  - Jumping Jacks
  - Hide-and-seek
  - Hokey-pokey
  - Hopscotch (make spaces with masking tape)
- Dance or do yoga
- Create an indoor obstacle course
- Play interactive electronic games like Wii and Dance Dance Revolution (DDR)
- Create a stair climbing competition
- Try juggling
- Build a fort

### “I turned off — and tuned in.”

“My parents had this idea: No TV or video games for a month. Thirty days, screen-free.

“We were bummed. Bored. And sort of desperate — like we were going through withdrawal.

“But around 2 weeks in, I wasn’t thinking that much about it anymore. I found other stuff to do. More drawing cartoons. More skateboarding. I built a ramp with my dad. I got into this series of books I’d been hearing about.

“The month’s almost over, but we’re going to extend our TV ban. Without it, the days seem more interesting . . . more colorful. Life’s too short to spend it staring at a screen.”

