

# COMMUNITY CONNECTION CAFÉ

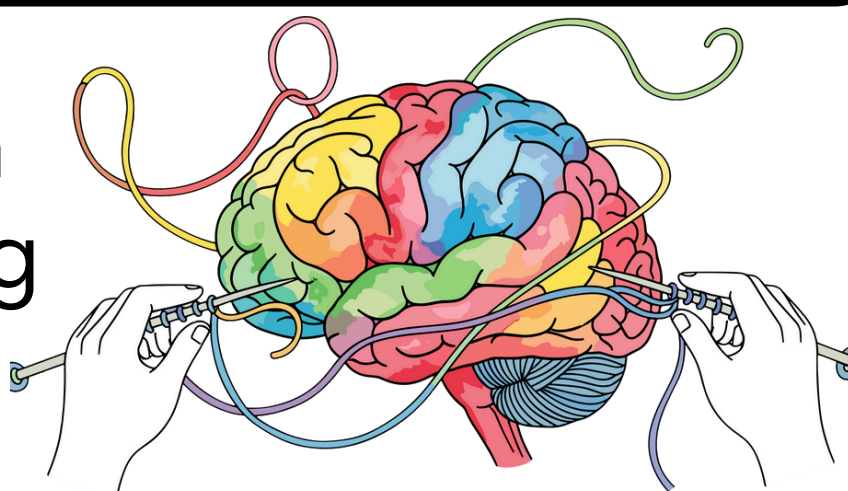


## SCREEN USE AND GROWING BRAINS

### What is screen time?

- the total time spent with any electronic device with a screen, including background use
- this includes television, computers, gaming devices, and mobile devices like smartphones and tablets

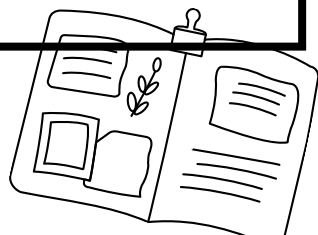
### How does screen use affect growing brains?

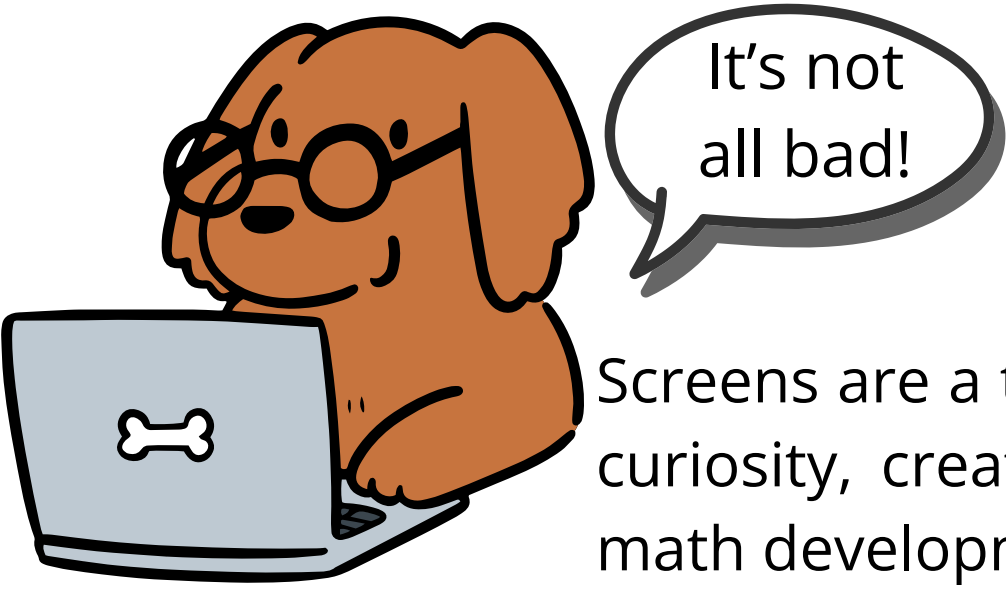


Approximately 90% of brain development occurs in the first five years of life. Screen use can disrupt developmental processes and brain connectivity, especially when it takes away from sleep, physical activity, and social interactions.

Excessive screen use can have a negative effect on language development, learning and memory, social emotional understanding, and executive functioning skills like attention, planning, organization, and working memory. It is associated with poor or disrupted sleep; increased difficulty regulating emotions; increased aggression; increased difficulties with attention and focus; lower levels of self-esteem in adolescence; body dissatisfaction; increased anxiety; & more.

Age of Child	Screen Use Recommendations
0-24 months	<p><b>None, especially in the first year.</b></p> <p>*Mindful, interactive video chatting with family/friends is an exception.</p>
2-5 years	<p><b>Maximum 1 hour per day.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize low-stimulation, high-quality content</li> <li>• Engage in co-viewing, asking questions, and discussing the content</li> </ul>
5-12 years	<p><b>Maximum 2 hours per day.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear, consistent screen time boundaries that prioritize healthy habits including sleep (9-12 hours) and physical activity (at least 1 hour)</li> <li>• Age-appropriate, <b>nonviolent</b> content and discussions of the content</li> <li>• Avoid use 1-2 hours before bedtime</li> </ul>
13+	<p><b>2 hours per day</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear, consistent screen time boundaries that prioritize healthy habits including sleep (8-10 hours); no screens before bed; and physical activity (at least 1 hour)</li> <li>• Avoid screens 1-2 hours before bedtime</li> <li>• Monitor social media exposure and online activities; help to develop digital media literacy</li> </ul>





Screens are a tool that can provide increased ability to access and share information; curiosity, creativity and educational opportunities like age-appropriate literacy and math development; social connections including video chatting; increased social support and a sense of belonging especially among minority groups. In addition, mindful, quality content and educational programs have been associated with improved emotional development, prosocial attitudes, imaginative play and learning-- think friendship, feelings, empathy, and respect.

## Considerations for Healthy Screen Use

### Be mindful and take it one step at a time

- Take the time to honestly reflect on your screen time and consider what needs to change for your own health and the health of your family

### Model Healthy Screen Use

- Minimize your own distractions so that you can be present to engage with your children
- Utilize screen time management tools to help

### Set clear boundaries

- Develop a Family Media Plan together that includes what, when, where, and for how long
- Be consistent! Follow through unless there are exceptional circumstances

### Monitor screen use and co-view

- Seek out quality, age-appropriate content and discuss the content your children are engaging with
- Ask questions, encourage them to explain what is happening or if they have questions

### Prioritize Offline Activities

- Move your body, dance, read, play a sport or board game, cook or bake together, explore nature, play I-Spy in the car

### Implement Screen Free Zones and Days

- Decide on spaces in your home where screens are not used by anyone; for example in bedrooms, or at the table during meals
- If possible, unplug completely for at least one day per month and spend time together as a family

### Monitor Wellbeing

- Notice the impact of screens on sleep quality, irritability and mood, focus and attention, emotional regulation and aggression, imagination and creative play, etc.

## Additional Resources

- Common Sense Media is a nonprofit organization that aims to provide trustworthy information and educational resources for media use including recommendations for low-stimulation shows, parent guides, conversation starters, and more.
- Create a Family Media Plan to establish healthy and safe technology use.
  - Family Technology Planning Template
- Low-stimulation content utilizes slower, more rhythmic speech and music, as well as softer, more realistic colours and light. It has smoother transitions and simple plots. A few examples include:
  - Sesame Street
  - Bluey
  - Mister Rogers' Neighbourhood
  - Ms. Rachel



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