



Tackling Technology

Children need increasing skill to navigate the digital world safely, but there is also the everyday question of balance: how much screen time is enough?

Start with the whole family

It is absolutely fine for children to use technology in their free time, provided there is a healthy balance of play, fresh air and face-to-face contact too. We cannot expect children to manage their own screen time if they see us glued to our phones all day, so it is worth looking at technology use as a whole family.

Set rules everyone follows

Agree family rules on screen time that apply to parents too, and consider writing them down. Rules about phones staying out of bedrooms overnight, or no technology at the table, work well. Remember to count all leisure screens: TV, consoles, tablets and phones all add up quickly. Offering bonus time at the weekend for sticking to the rules during the week can help everyone buy in.

Manage the transition

Let children know the time limit before they start, and give reminders as it runs out: “you’ve got ten minutes left,” then “five minutes.” A visible timer helps. Sitting alongside your child and taking a genuine interest as time runs out, “this looks like a great game, but it’s time to stop now”, makes compliance more likely than shouting from across the room. If they protest, follow through calmly anyway.

Have alternatives ready

A visible list of other things to do can help avoid the “boredom default” of reaching for a screen. When children come off their devices as soon as asked, remember to praise that too.

Leisure screen time is a privilege, not a right, and setting limits is not depriving your child, it is part of the job.