



Digital Bulletin – Screen Time

I would very much expect that you and your children may have different views on what is an appropriate amount of time to spend using screens. There is no definitive answer; however, I would like to provide some further information and advice on this topic. If there are any specific areas that you would like advice or support, please email me at njl@reigategrammar.org

The dangers of over-exposure

Devices like smartphones, tablets and TVs have many advantages for children. They make them more informed about the world and help them stay in touch with their friends meaning they're more active socially. But they also have their drawbacks.

Children can come under pressure through social media to look or behave a certain way. They can also be exposed to advertising or unsuitable content. And far from encouraging them to socialise, too much time spent in a room staring at a screen can do just the opposite and harm their social development. Other potential side effects include disrupted sleep, not enough exercise and the danger of neglecting schoolwork.

Screen time: What's recommended

Unfortunately, in the UK, there are no official guidelines on how much screen time is healthy for children. But [Common Sense Media](#), a non-profit organisation that aims to help children thrive in a world of media and technology, advises setting a family schedule for media use. This can include weekly screen time limits, limits on the kinds of screens children can use, and guidelines on the types of activity they can do or programmes they can watch. Experts also advise parents share screen time with their children. That way, you can see what they're being exposed to and help them apply its teachings to the real world.

How to limit your child's screen time

[Internet Matters](#) has some tips to help you manage your children's screen time.

- It's important to set a good example with your own device use. Children will model their behaviour on you, so make sure you're not glued to a screen every time they see you.
- Talk to them about the amount of time they spend online and what they spend that time doing.
- Agree on an appropriate amount of time they can use their device.
- Get the whole family to unplug together and create screen-free zones of the house, such as bedrooms or the dinner table. This will encourage children to talk more and not be absorbed in a screen all the time.
- Technology can help. For example, [BT's Parental Controls](#) let you set times when children can't get online, so they can focus on doing their homework.

Be sensible and exercise some common sense and you'll set your children up for a far healthier relationship with technology that will stand them in good stead later in their lives.

Screen addiction

Various screen usage can trigger dopamine releases in the brain, which acts as a reward system for certain things that we do. With this in mind it is easy to see how screen and technology usage can lead to a form of addiction. Your children (or yourselves) may experience anxiety on withdrawal from devices, or FOMO (fear of missing out). At school we aim to encourage students to use technology responsibly and in a balanced and appropriate manner. If you are concerned about your child's online usage, please feel free to email me at njl@reigategrammar.org if you wish to discuss this further. We are very much of the opinion that caring for your children involves a partnership between the school and home.