

Thinking About Screen Use:

2 to 3 Years



Toddlers are learning so much every day! They are practicing how to run, jump, and climb. They are learning new words. They make jokes! They test new ideas as they play. They can pretend to be anything—a dinosaur or a dog.

They need you for this important learning. They learn when you talk to them. They learn when you play with them. They learn when you respond to them. Screens can't do this. Only people can!

Wondering about screen use with your child? Here's where to start.

1

All kids are different. Some children don't care much about screens. Others ask for them all the time. Knowing how *your* child responds can help you develop healthy limits for them. Remember, most toddlers have a very hard time learning from screens. They still learn best by playing and exploring in the "real world."

2

Quality matters. If you choose to let your child use screens, pick programs like those from PBS KIDS. Shows like Blue's Clues or Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood can help children learn facts, healthy behaviors, and how to manage feelings.

3

Remember to turn off auto-play on streaming services. If your child watches YouTube, make a playlist of high-quality videos for them.

4

Avoid harmful content. Skip anything scary. Watching scary videos or games can be harmful to toddlers. Keep it fun and just right for their age.



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



5

Use screens *with* your child. Watch shows or play games together. Talk about what is happening. What behavior do they see? What did the characters do? Help them connect the show to something that happened in real life.

6

Remember that toddlers have big feelings and still need your help to manage them. Screens can distract kids from their feelings, but they won't help them learn *what to do* with their feelings. Screens shouldn't be the way they calm down.

7

Try to keep mealtimes and bedtime screen-free, too. These are great chances to talk together and help kids learn the skills of eating and falling asleep.

8

Think about how screens fit into your day. Too much screen use can get in the way of playing, moving, reading, and connecting with family. Make sure your child has a good mix of activities each day. You can go to the park, have a dance party in the living room, or blow bubbles anywhere. Keep screen time a small part of the daily schedule.

9

Be aware of your own screen use. Phones and other screens can be big distractions for adults, too! Staying off screens most of the time helps caregivers connect with toddlers. Turning off screens (like TV) in the background is also a good idea. Background TV can distract children from important learning.

Have more questions? Talk to your child's healthcare provider or one of the professionals supporting your family.

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