

How to Swap Screen Time for Active Play: The Early Years

Make room for play.



- The Canadian Paediatric Society discourages all screen-based activities for children under two. Limit television watching to one hour or less per day for children ages two to four years.
- Avoid making television watching part of your regular daily routine. If there is a specific program that your child likes to watch, turn the TV off once it is finished.
- Avoid using screens as an “electronic babysitter”. Set your kids up with toys to play with while you get things done.
- Eliminate background TV. If the TV is turned on — even if it’s just in the background — it’s likely to draw your child’s attention. If you’re not actively watching TV, turn it off. Instead, turn on music!
- Make screen time active time: play with little ones during commercial breaks and choose shows that get your child up and moving through music, dancing or other forms of physical activity.
- Tell sitters and relatives that when they’re with your kids, active, fun time is expected.
- Kids naturally play more actively when they’re outdoors, so head outside with them every day. Talk about how much fun it is to play outdoors.
- Before you switch on the TV or the computer for your children, stop and think – could they spend the time being active?
- Have a list of active indoor and outdoor games or activities for your children, so you can suggest alternatives to screen time.
- Set a good example. Be a good role model by limiting your own screen time.
- Unplug for a day. Designate one day a week or month as a screen-free day for the whole family.



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