



A monthly publication provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education.

Resources for Families

Setting limits on screen time

A 2014 Nielsen study found that adults spend an average of 11 hours per day with electronic media. That includes radio, TV, smartphones, Internet, game consoles and DVDs or Blu-Ray. <http://on.mash.to/1hf8Si>

In Canada, adults spent 39 hours a month browsing the web, and 25-40 year old Canadians spend about 110 hours a month using electronic devices.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/technology/mobile/video-and-mobile-use-doubles-canadians-time-spent-online-firm-says/article21551994/>

Additional studies have shown that children are following in the footsteps of their parents. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) estimates that today's children spend an average of seven hours a day on electronic media.

The Canadian Pediatric Society's position on the maximum amount of time a child should spend in front of the television between 1-2 hours per day. AAP takes an even stronger stance, saying that allowable "screen time" shouldn't just take in television, but all devices; smartphones, computers, gaming devices, tablets, etc.

While there is still discussion between experts about the appropriate amount of screen time, experts all agree that it is wise to limit the time children spend on digital activities while finding a balance with other activities.

Making wise choices for our children's media diet

Some guidelines for media consumption in your family could include:

- Monitoring entertainment to ensure age appropriate use and avoiding inappropriate content such as violence, sexual content or tobacco and alcohol use.
- Establishing "screen-free" zones at home, defined as no TVs in the bedroom and turning off television during dinner and homework time. <http://bit.ly/1LXkyCm>

Additional guidelines and resources are at:

- Caringforkids.cps.ca, sponsored by the Canadian Pediatric Society
- SafetyNet.org, sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Topics on these sites include:

- How can I set limits on my children's screen time?
- How can I help my child develop healthy electronic media habits? http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/limiting_screen_time_at_home
- Talking to Kids and Teens about Social Media and Sexting
- Keeping Kids Safe in Cyberspace
- The Internet and Your Family
- Media Time Family Pledge <http://safetynet.aap.org/>

Harmful effects of too much screen time

There are many reasons to step back from electronics. Reducing use of electronic devices through reasonable limits could make a big difference in students' academic and social



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skills by freeing up more time for studies and other pursuits.

There is another important reason to look at the big picture of students' digital activity. Too much digital time may impact our ability to focus.

Consider this headline: "Thanks Social Media – Our Average Attention Span is Shorter than Goldfish."

According to one research group, "the average attention span of a human being has dropped from 12 seconds in 2000 to eight seconds in 2013. This is one second less than the attention span of a goldfish. That's right, goldfish have an attention span of 9 seconds – 1 second more than you and I."

www.digitalistmag.com/sales-marketing/thanks-social-media-average-attention-span-now-shorter-goldfish-01251966

The scientists suggest that the external stimulation from sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat and more every day, is causing us to divide our attention.

"Attention span is the amount of concentrated time on a task without becoming distracted. Most educators and psychologists agree that the ability to focus attention on a task is crucial for the achievement of one's goals. It's no surprise attention spans have been decreasing over the past decade with the increase in external stimulation.

Additional statistics on attention spans:

- 25 per cent of teenagers report forgetting important details about their friends and family.

- Seven per cent of people forget their own birthdays from time to time.
- The average office worker checks their email 30 times every hour.
- Typical mobile users check their phones more than 150 times per day.
- Content on the internet tripled between 2010 and 2013.
- Social media sharing has doubled from 2011 to 2013."

Emotional impact of a lot of screen time

In addition to social media-related distractions, other side-effects of too much screen time include increased narcissism, antisocial behavior and aggressive tendencies, susceptibility to anxiety and increased depression, and lower grades among students who check their statuses too often.

www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2011/08/social-kids.aspx

Balance is the key

Social media interactions can be positive if there are limits on online activity. The Pew Research Center's Report, Teens, Technology and Friendships, suggests that social media can have positive effects on teens actual social lives. Many teens report making new friendships online – 57 per cent have developed a friendship through a social platform. Friendships can be strengthened through social media environments.

www.pewinternet.org/files/2015/08/Teens-and-Friendships-FINAL2.pdf