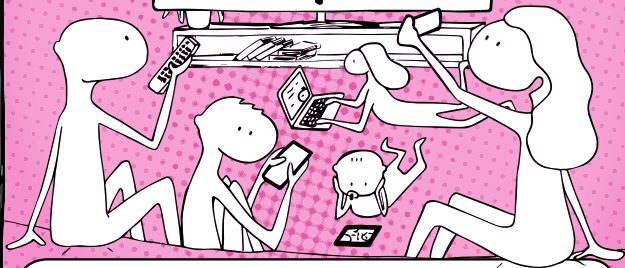


## KIDS AND NEW MEDIA



### **Dear parents!**

Finding your way through the maze of the new media is not always easy and it is even more difficult for children. Children shouldn't start using new technologies too early, for a healthy development they should be able to play freely, move a lot and get enough sleep. But when you do start to introduce new media in your family, prepare to be a competent and responsible guide for your children. Reflect your own behavior and find reliable information. Take time to explore this new world together.

## When to use electronic devices?

Small children are curious creatures and if their parents and siblings use electronic devices they want to know what it is all about. However, small children are also completely open to media, both in positive and negative ways. This is why you as a parent need to guide your child through the maze of the vast landscape of new media and teach them the rules of this world.

There is no evidence that the use of even the most educational media content has any positive effects on children younger than 18 months. There are however, many negative effects of new media use for children, such as a lack of movement, caused by sitting in front of screens, problems with concentration and poorer sleeping patterns due to too stimulant content and exposure to blue light. The WHO recommends to limit or avoid media use of children younger than 5, limit sitting time altogether and encourage quality sleep and active play. These are the cornerstones to help your children grow up into healthy adults.

**Children younger  
than 2 years**

should not sit in  
front of screens  
at all.

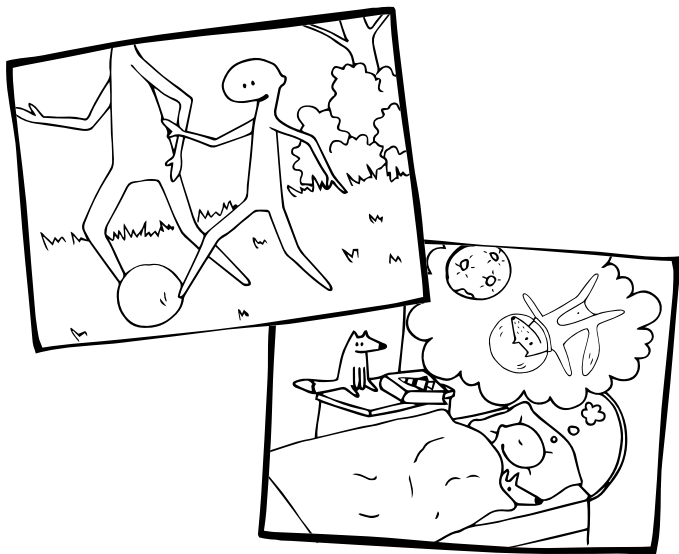
**Children aged 2-5**

should not sit  
longer than  
**1 hour per day**  
in front of a screen.

**Children older  
than 5:**

**add ten minutes**  
of screen-time  
for every  
additional year.

Use media when you have time, so you can guide the child and talk together about what they are seeing. Media should not be used as a baby sitter, during meal times or before sleep. Children must learn to eat mindfully to avoid bad eating habits and disease associated with them in adulthood. Be aware that the blue light from screens can interfere with sleep, so avoid a night-time cartoon and opt for a good-night story.



## How to use new media with children?

Children today grow up as “digital natives”, and media content is embedded in their everyday life. They confront media without fear and learn how to use electronic devices very fast. It is easy to confuse this ease with media competence. But to have media competence means to have the ability to use media responsibly and critically, it means to know and understand media. Children need to learn all this and you as a parent are their most important partner on this journey.

Don't wait for the children to get older, start media education in your family from the time children begin to use electronic devices. Even things that might seem obvious to you need to be learned by the children, for example to differentiate between commercials and program. Take time to watch TV or play games together and be there to answer questions and to make sure that your child doesn't get overwhelmed by the content. Using parental control is important as well, but does not substitute your presence.

One of the cornerstones of media competence is the ability to use media creatively and innovatively and to use them as a means of expression. Children love to get creative with electronic devices and this approach is a great way to foster media education at home. You can get creative together, have fun and make precious family memories along the way.



## Use media together

Explore the world of media together, talk about media and stay interested in what your children do online and behind screens even when they get older.



## Ensure a safe environment

Make sure to set parental controls on all your devices.

## Get creative

Try out activities to approach media in a creative and active way, with or without devices.

## Be a role model

Children imitate your behavior. Reflect on your media use and limit it at home. Don't use electronic devices during mealtimes and when playing with your children.

## Encourage responsibility

Discuss "digital citizenship" and encourage children to be responsible online. Discuss online bullying and let children know that actions online have consequences in the real world.

## **Which new media should the children use?**

There may be benefits of active and constructive use of new media. Children can learn new skills, practice foreign languages and satisfy their curiosity. But not all media content is suitable for children and younger children especially have developmental needs that have to be taken into consideration by the developers of the content they consume.

Although there is a heap of content for children claiming to be educational, only a small part of it is recommended by experts. What children like and are drawn to is not necessarily the best choice for them from a developmental point of view. Fast movements and loud sounds for example can have negative effects on children's sleep and their ability to concentrate. Therefore it is important that you choose the content for them carefully. Opt for programs and games that ignite curiosity, practice skills and foster creativity. There are good sources online, which can help you find age appropriate and high quality shows, apps and cartoons for your child, for example Common Sense Media.

## Keep it age appropriate

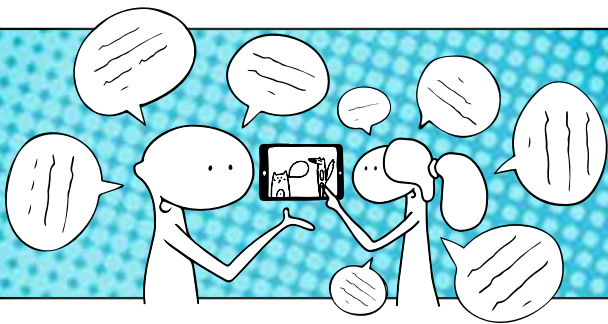
Make sure that your child watches, plays with or communicates age appropriate content. Be aware of age rating.

## Look for high quality educational material

Turn to trusted sources and certified content.

## Foster creativity

Select games and apps that let your child be creative.



## Be present

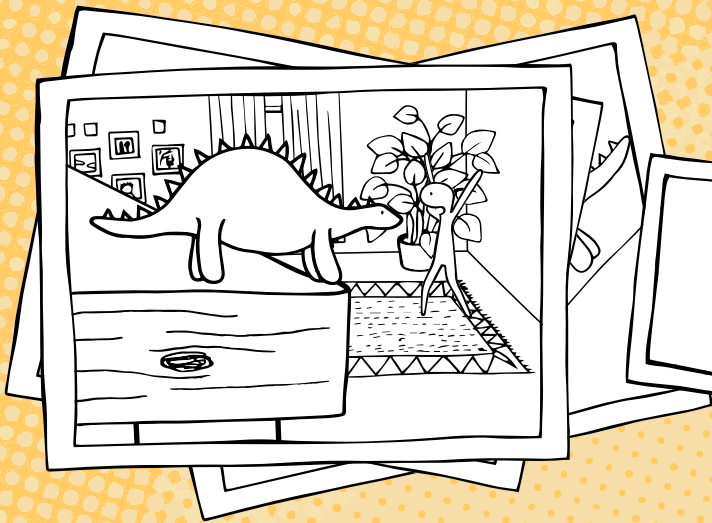
Younger children learn better from media when they share the experience with an adult.



**Limit time,  
explain the content,  
and secure the devices!**

## Ideas for creative media use at home – get creative together with photography!

1. Play with perspective. Hold or place something small (for example a dinosaur figurine) close to the camera and let the child stand far away. Make a photo. The small object will appear big on the photo! Try out different ideas, for example let the child “hold” a huge piece of fruit. Come up with your own ideas together!



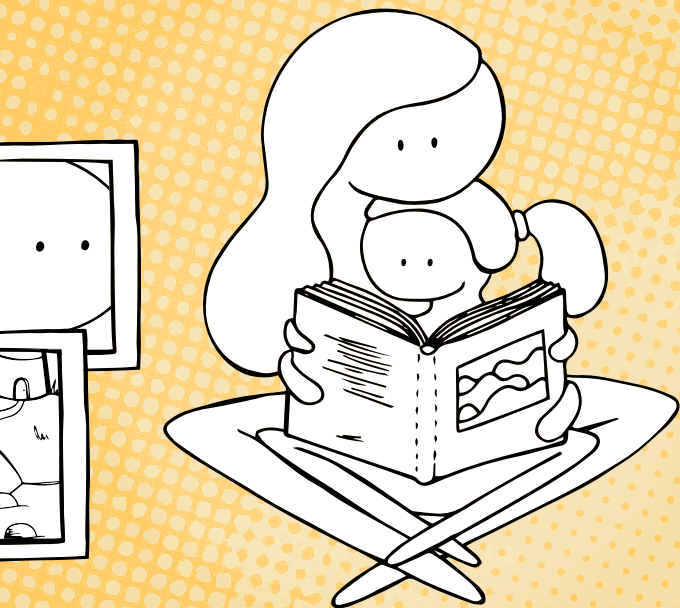
## 2.

Make photos of parts of the body of family members, for example close-ups of eyes, fingers, knees... Print them out or view them on the computer and try to guess together which family member they belong to.



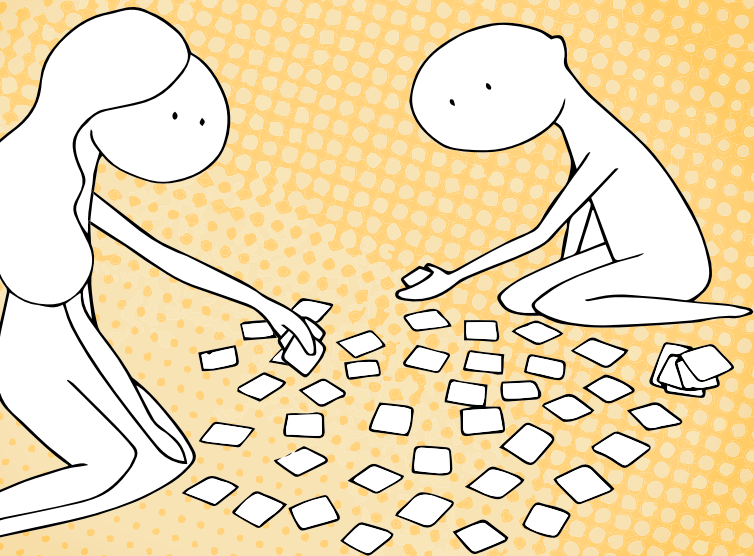
# 3.

Go to the library and find a photography book. It can be photo-art or pictures of things you and your child like, such as landscapes, people from different parts of the world or horses. Look together through the book and discuss the pictures. Maybe try to make your own photobook.



# 4.

Make a family memory game. Take pictures together – of family members, friends or objects in and around the house. Print and cut them out. Play memory together!



You can find more information  
and creative ideas for photography  
with children on our website  
[www.eduskills.plus/media](http://www.eduskills.plus/media)

### Links to interesting websites:

Age-based media reviews for families:  
[www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)

Critical media project:  
[criticalmediaproject.org](http://criticalmediaproject.org)

Canada's centre for digital and media literacy:  
[mediasmarts.ca](http://mediasmarts.ca)

**EduSkills+**  
Media

Co-funded by the  
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