

# Handy Handouts®



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## Disconnect the Tech! Help Your Child "Plug-In" to Good Communication

by Staci Jackson, M.A., CCC-SLP

Technology is everywhere and it is being used by younger and younger children. Most children today have been using technology almost since birth. Recently, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) polled parents of children under the age of eight regarding their daily use of technology. The results are thought-provoking. Parents reported that 62% of the two-year olds use tablets, 59% use smartphones, and 44% use game consoles. Despite these findings, a majority of parents reported that they believe technology negatively impacts the quality and quantity of conversations with their children.

This begs the question, "What impact does technology have on communication development in young children?" While the implications of technology use are not yet fully understood, we do know that human interaction is essential for speech and language development. Because the brains of young children develop rapidly during their first years and they learn best by interacting with people, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that screens be avoided altogether until a child turns two. According to the Urban Child Institute, there are other good reasons to limit your child's technology use:

-  • Technology use can limit conversation and interaction that is crucial for vocabulary growth in young children. Studies have proven that there is a link between the number and variety of words a child hears and later success in school.
-  • Watching lots of television can lead to weaker language skills.



- Screen time, especially before bedtime, can interfere with sleep.



- Relying on technology for entertainment limits time for important creative play which has a crucial role in language and brain development.



So, how can you create "unplugged" time for your child? ASHA suggests these tips to manage your child's use of technology and create meaningful alternatives to screen time:



**1. Choose toys that inspire creativity.** Age-appropriate craft supplies, dress-up props, and building blocks keep children busy and engage them in make-believe play.



**2. Include your child in daily chores.** Young children readily imitate adults. Offer your child opportunities to participate in daily tasks such as sorting laundry, dusting furniture, or watering plants.



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(cont.)




**6. Turn off the TV and other tech devices.** In many homes, the television is on in the background. Studies indicate that background TV noise can interfere with a child's ability to concentrate. Background TV noise and use of other technology devices also lowers the quantity and quality of family interactions. Turning off the TV and other devices limits distractions and provides opportunities for family members to talk to one another.




**7. Make tech use a family activity.** When you do allow your child to use technology, use the device together and talk about your shared experiences.




**8. Model good tech habits for your child.** Children learn from watching the adults around them. Practice the tech habits you want your child to use. Little eyes are always watching.



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For more information regarding technology use please <http://screentimenetwork.org/>.



**3. Reading and sharing stories is not just for bedtime.** Consider reading or telling stories to your child during the daytime too. Shared stories help children learn early sequencing, vocabulary, and grammar skills.



**4. Get on the floor and play with your child.** Children learn important social skills such as turn-taking, sharing, and conversation from joint play activities. Playing with your child also gives you the opportunity to communicate with your child and model good language skills.



**5. Let your child get dirty!** Outdoor play helps young children develop gross motor skills and provides opportunities for encounters they can't have in an indoor environment. Play in the backyard, visit a local park, or find a playgroup.

Resources:

10 Tips for Managing Kids' Tech Time. (n.d.). Retrieved June 1, 2015, from <http://www.asha.org/bhsm/Ten-Tips-Blog-Post/>

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Kaplan, K. (2015, April 27). More than a third of infants are using smartphones, tablets. Retrieved June 1, 2015, from <http://www.latimes.com/science/sciencenow/la-sci-sn-babies-screen-time-iphone-ipad-20150424-story.html>

Page, J. L. (2015, May 8). Babies don't need smartphones. Retrieved June 1, 2015, from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/05/08/technology-babies-speech-development-toddler-column/70940608>

Page, J. L. (2015, May 12). Tots as young as 2 use tablets, and parents are worried, Asha survey finds [Blog post]. Retrieved from The ASHA Leader Blog: <http://blog.asha.org/2015/05/12/asha-survey-paints-picture-of-todays-connected-2-year-old-and-opens-dialogue-on-potentialimplications-for-communication-development/>

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