



# SCREEN TIME & DEVICE OVERUSE: A PARENT'S PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Screens are part of life. Balance is the key. Too much screen time can affect sleep, mood, learning and wellbeing. You can help. Here's what parents need to know.

- 70%** of 8-17 year olds spend too much time on screens (NHS (2023))
- 4.5 HOURS** average daily screen time for teens (Ofcom (2023))
- 2x** higher risk of poor sleep with high screen use (Sleep Foundation (2022))
- 1 IN 3** parents say screen time causes daily family conflict (Parent Zone (2023))

- WHAT IT IS**  
The time spent on screens like phones, tablets, consoles, TVs and computers.
- HOW IT HAPPENS**  
It adds up quickly. Games, apps, social media and videos are designed to keep us watching.
- WHAT KIDS LIKE**  
Entertainment, connection, gaming, creativity, learning and relaxing.
- WHY IT'S A PROBLEM**  
Too much can affect sleep, focus, mood, health, behaviour and real-life time.
- THE RISKS**  
Poor sleep, anxiety, low mood, attention problems, less movement, isolation.
- THE CONVERSATION**  
Talk early. Listen first. Set boundaries together. Lead with trust, not control.

### WHAT TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME CAN AFFECT

- Sleep**: Harder to fall asleep. Poor quality sleep.
- Mental Health**: More stress, anxiety and low mood.
- Focus & Learning**: Harder to concentrate. Lower motivation.
- Physical Health**: Less movement. Weight gain. Eye strain. Headaches.
- Behaviour**: More irritability. Meltdowns. Short fuse.
- Relationships**: Less face-time. More conflict with family and friends.
- Real-Life Balance**: Less time for school, hobbies, outdoor play and rest.
- Safety Risks**: More exposure to online risks and strangers.

### WHAT PARENTS NEED TO UNDERSTAND

- it's not just about time.** Content, context and your child's personality all matter.
- Balance beats zero.** Screens aren't the enemy. Overuse is.
- Small changes, big difference.** Routines and limits help more than lectures.

Connection, routine and boundaries build healthy habits.

### BY THE NUMBERS

- 53%** of kids say they sometimes or always feel addicted to their screens (Common Sense Media (2022))
- 62%** of teens get notifications even during homework time (Pew Research (2022))
- 20%** get less than the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep on school nights (CDC (2022))
- 45%** of parents say screen time impacts their child's mood or behaviour (Parent Zone (2023))

### SAFETY FEATURES / SETTINGS

WHAT EXISTS	WHAT TO CHANGE
<b>Screen Time / Digital Wellbeing</b> See usage and set limits.	Set daily limits that work for your family.
<b>Downtime / Focus Mode</b> Block apps and alerts at bedtime or school time.	Block during homework, meals and bedtime.
<b>App Limits</b> Set daily time limits for apps and categories.	Turn off unnecessary notifications.
<b>Content Restrictions</b> Block inappropriate content and mature websites.	Review apps your child uses most.
<b>Family Link / Family Sharing</b> Manage devices and approve apps and purchases.	Check privacy and content settings.

Find these in: Settings > Screen Time / Digital Wellbeing (or similar).

### STEP-BY-STEP: FIND BETTER BALANCE

- Check your child's screen time. Look at usage together.
- Set clear boundaries. Agree on times, places and limits.
- Create screen-free zones. Bedrooms, meals and family time.
- Plan fun offline time. Sports, hobbies, reading, friends.
- Lead by example. Your habits shape theirs.
- Review and adjust. What works today may change. Keep talking.

### THE RISKS WORTH KNOWING

- Poor Sleep**: Blue light and late-night use can disrupt sleep.
- Mental Health Impact**: Overuse is linked to anxiety, low mood and body image issues.
- Attention Problems**: Constant stimulation can reduce focus and patience.
- Safety Risks**: More screen time can mean more exposure to online risks.
- Less Physical Activity**: Too much sitting affects fitness and overall health.
- Academic Impact**: It can reduce study time and lower achievement.

### THE 10-MINUTE CONVERSATION

- How do you feel after a lot of screen time?
- What apps or games do you enjoy most? Why?
- What's getting in the way of balance?
- What limits or routines would help you?

**TRUST OVER SURVEILLANCE**  
Partner with your child. It works better.

### IF THINGS GO WRONG

**STAY CALM & TAKE ACTION**

- Take a break. Reset together.
- Reduce screen time gradually.
- Focus on sleep, routine and offline time.
- Praise small wins.

**GET SUPPORT**

- Talk to your GP if mood, sleep or behaviour are affected.
- Contact Childline if you need support.
- Seek help for persistent problems.

★ You did the right thing. Help is available.