

Technology Use Age 4 Summary

Why Technology Use?

As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you play an essential role in your child's success. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship and ensure your child develops a healthy relationship with technology. After all, technology is simply a set of tools that can serve the beneficial purposes of entertaining, educating, creating, connecting to others, and making life easier.

Tip: These steps are best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

Tip: Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

STEP 1 **GET INPUT** **Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their Input**

Writing down notes for yourself on your child's responses to the following questions will support you when you work on developing rules or routines for device use. Additionally, your writing down notes will show your child that you are listening seriously and care about their input.

- What are all of the things you love to do?
- Who do you love to see or play with?

And after using a device,

- How do you feel? Since your young child is still developing a feelings vocabulary, one way to help them learn to label their feelings is to offer what you observe in brief, simple terms and ask if you are right. "You seem happy. Or you seem frustrated. Is that right?"

When setting rules around device use, use the insights you gained through these questions. What does your young child value? How can you meet their hopes and dreams by safeguarding playtime or time for family connection (without device use)?

**STEP
2****Teach New Skills**

Trap: Screen time should not replace solo playtime and playtime with friends and family. Young children learn through unstructured play! Exposure to nature, exercise, play, and social interaction are all key factors in your child's healthy development. Your rules and routines can safeguard time for these.

Trap: Because young children are new to making sense of media, it's important not to leave them alone with media to view without engaging with them. Be sure you are close by to help talk through what they are viewing and help them make meaning from what they see. Find other ways as a caregiver to get all-important breaks from being with your young child.

Tip: Reading together is essential for daily connection, meaning-making, and learning. For a list of picture books that highlight social and emotional skill themes, check out the following:
<https://confidentparentsconfidentkids.org/kid-resources/picturebooks/>

Model healthy technology habits.

- Because technology plays a significant role in family life, modeling how you use technology teaches young children more than your words ever could.
- Take a moment to think about the following: How are you disciplined about technology? Do you have rules for putting the laptop down and working away at the end of the day? Do you have times when you turn off or leave behind your phone? Share those practices with your child so that they understand that it's not only children who have to manage devices and cultivate healthy technology habits.
- Notice how you cope with challenges and uncomfortable feelings. Do you tend to use technology as an "escape"? Talk with your child about how you are feeling and what you will do to calm down rather than tune out.

Find nourishing and age-appropriate content.

- Shows explicitly designed to provide educational content for young children, such as the long-running Sesame Street, are available. Choose nourishing content for your child to view.
- Check review sites for the developmental appropriateness of series, movies, games, apps, and more. Make sure that the content is designed for your child's age.
- Become intentional about viewing. Designate specific viewing times. Do not leave media on as background noise during playtime.

Tip: When not using technology, sharing the focus of your child’s imaginative play can create opportunities to grow your trust and intimacy while helping your child develop valuable social and emotional skills and enhance brain development.

Trap: Not all media is trustworthy! Young children should not be given devices to scroll through a wide range of videos because the content they might inadvertently encounter is far from age-appropriate. Be selective about your young child’s viewing.

STEP
3



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me…” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity. When your child learns a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say, *“Show me you can put your tablet away when your time is up.”*
- Set an alarm like a kitchen timer with your young children so that you don’t have to be the one to tell them to turn off the device. The timer indicates when their time is over.
- Recognize effort using “I notice…” statements like, *“I notice how you powered down when the alarm went off. That’s smart!”*
- Proactively remind your child to help them be successful. The challenges of daily routines recur day after day. Remind in a gentle, non-public way. You can whisper in your child’s ear, *“Remember what time it is? What’s next we don’t want to miss out on?”*

Trap: Resist the temptation to repeat yourself or scold constantly. If you’ve had a habit of fewer rules and routines around devices, it can take time to get into a new habit. Have patience and invest in reminding and recognizing positive steps forward, even if small. It may take a few consistent weeks of repetitive routines for your child to own and do them fully without prompting.

STEP
4



Support Your Child’s Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude. Show confidence that your child can learn anything with time and practice (because they genuinely can!). Your comments and reflections will matter significantly in how competent they feel to meet any learning challenge, especially when learning to manage technology in healthy ways!
- Ask key questions like:
 - *“It looks like you’re on screens longer than we agreed. Can I help you set an alarm?”*
 - *“What are you missing out on that you love to do? Playing with toys, seeing friends, going to a playground?”*

- “Are you feeling good about what you are viewing? If not, how can we look for content that will make you feel better if you feel more fearful or sad?”
- Coach your child to use their feelings as a guide. You might notice your child feeling more anxious, angry, or frustrated after spending time on screens. You might then say, “Seems like you are feeling _____, is that right? Why do you think that is?” Be sure you reflect on why the challenging feelings arose—was it too much time on screens or the content they were viewing?
- Stay engaged. Be sure you are nearby while your young child is on a device so that you can help select what to view and reflect on what is being viewed to help them make meaning of it.

STEP

5



RECOGNIZE

Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when things are going well. It may seem obvious, but it’s easy not to notice when everything moves smoothly. Noticing and naming the behavior provides the necessary reinforcement that you see and value your child’s choice.
- Recognize small steps along the way. Don’t wait for significant accomplishments—like the whole bedtime routine going smoothly—to recognize effort. Remember that your recognition can work as a tool to promote more positive behaviors. Find small ways your child is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, after completing your bedtime routine, snuggle and read before bed.

Trap: It can be easy to resort to bribes when recognition and occasional rewards are underutilized. If parents or those in a parenting role frequently resort to bribes, it is likely time to revisit the five-step process.

Trap: Think about what behavior a bribe may unintentionally reinforce. For example, offering a sucker if a child stops a tantrum in the grocery store checkout line may teach the child that future tantrums lead to additional treats.

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