Finding the Balance Between
All Tech << | >> No Tech

Raising Healthy Young Children in the Multi-Screen, Multi-Touch Digital World

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About Erikson Institute

Our vision is that every adult who works with young children or on their behalf will be knowledgeable, aware, skilled, and alive to the possibilities of each child’s life.
The young and the digital
"No matter how helpful computers are as tools (and of course they can be very helpful tools), they don't begin to compare in significance to the teacher-child relationship which is human and mutual. A computer can help you learn to spell HUG, but it can never know the risk or the joy or actually giving or receiving one."
What are the concerns?

• Place limits on passive, on-interactive use
• Exposure to inappropriate use (violence, sexuality, lifestyle)
• Exposure to commercial messages and in-app sales
• Children can’t differentiate between real and virtual
• Socially isolating, impacts social-emotional development and interrupts adult-child relationship
• Displacement – replaces traditional, developmentally valuable activities like hands-on, creative, open-ended play
• Reduces outdoor time, decreases physical activity / Increases obesity
• Increases sleep disruptions
• Adult media use, misuse, over use and “always on” tech

...finding the balance
The 3 Cs for choosing tech tools

- **CONTENT** How does this help children engage, express, imagine, or explore?

- **CONTEXT** How does it complement, and not interrupt, children’s natural play?

- The Unique CHILD: How do we choose the right tech tools and experiences for each child’s needs, abilities, interests and development stage?

*Digital Media and Early Learning: What We Know & What We Need to Know*
What do we know?

Relationships matter

• Young children learn best in the context of interactions and relationships with attentive, responsive, caring adults

• Technology use should support and strengthen adult/child relationships not interrupt or prevent them

Joint engagement with media matters

• Just as with reading books, using media together with children leads to more learning
What do we know?

Content matters

• For screen-based media, the “active ingredients” matter

• The content on the screen includes:
  – Characters who children build relationships with
  – An engaging story
  – Elements that promote guided play
  – Avoidance of distractions
What do we know?

Context matters

- Individual child’s development, learning and the family media ecology matters
- Children learn best in active environments when they are engaged in meaningful, interactive and social contexts
- The use of the media depends greatly on children’s interests and needs, and families’ needs, backgrounds, languages and cultures
- Providing access to quality media requires engaging parents and children at home, in school and in informal “third spaces” – libraries, museums, zoos and nature center
What do we know?

Creating media matters

- Young children are capable of creating their own messages and expressing themselves through media.
- Intrinsic motivation as opposed to rewards – it’s engaging, fun, interactive, interesting to me.
- When children have control and can progress on a continuum from consuming media > meaning-making with media > creating media.
We know relationships matter

- Media use in the context of the adult/child relationship
- A more knowledgeable other/more capable peers (Vygotsky, ZPD)
- Co-viewing < joint engagement with media
- Socially contingent / responsive interactions
- Parasocial relationships
- Pro-social behaviors
- Guided play and mediated experiences
Policy Statement – Children, Adolescents, and the Media
COUNCIL ON COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA

• TV and new media remain a dominant force in children’s lives
• Concerned about potential harmful effects and media messages
• Now recognizes positive and prosocial effects of interactive media use
• Parents are encouraged to establish a family home use plan for all media

*Kids can learn many positive things from “prosocial” media. The key is to teach children to make healthy media choices.*
Content Matters

Dr. Dimitri Christakis
George Adkins Professor of Pediatrics
Seattle Children’s Research Institute
Center for Child Health, Behavior and Development
University of Washington, Seattle, WA

“All media is educational – so we need to be aware of what children are being educated about.”

“...our time and energy working to improve what our children watch, not just how much they watch, can have a positive impact on their behavior.”
Zero to Eight: Children’s Media Use in America 2013

- Mobile device use by young children is up since 2011
- Television and video game use is down more than a half-hour a day for children
- Tablet ownership by parents and children is up for children – 38% of infants and toddlers have used a mobile device (up from 10% in 2011)
- The average amount of time children spend using mobile devices has tripled, from 5 minutes a day to an average use of 15 minutes a day
- Access to mobile media among poor and minority children is much higher than it was two years ago but a digital divide still persists.
“We have to help give children tools, building blocks for active play. And the computer is one of those building blocks. No computer will ever take the place of wooden toys or building blocks. But that doesn’t mean they have to be mutually exclusive.” Fred Rogers
Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8

A joint position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College
What are the key messages?

• When used intentionally and appropriately, technology and interactive media are effective tools to support learning and development.

• Intentional use requires early childhood teachers and administrators to have information and resources regarding the nature of these tools and the implications of their use with children.
What are the key messages?

• Limitations on the use of technology and media are important.

• Special considerations must be given to the use of technology with infants and toddlers.

• Attention to digital citizenship and equitable access is essential.

• Ongoing research and professional development are needed.
What do parents need?

- Tech knowledge, competency, digital literacy
- Awareness of their own media habits
- Advice from digitally literate educators and pediatric health professionals
- Help in knowing what quality media is
- On-going parent education
- Hands-on opportunities to play
- Parent-to-Parent sharing
- New and ongoing research
The 3 M roles for achieving balance

1. Manager
2. Mediator
3. Mentor
Quick Tips for Media Managers, Mediators and Mentors

- Play together
- Guide the way
- Limit tech time
- Have fun offline
- Be a good example
- Strive for balance
5 tips for media managers

1. Be a good digital media role model and enthusiastic tour guide – and follow your child

2. Do your homework – your digital media literacy matters

3. Be intentional – know what, when, how and WHY – when you select, use, integrate, and evaluate technology tools

4. Curate content

5. Limit tech time
5 tips for media mediators

1. Be a great digital media playmate and co-explorer – *a more knowledgeable other*

2. Be tuned-in and attentive, keep it interactive, stay engaged

3. Match the tools and content with your child’s age, developmental level, interests, learning preferences, language and culture

4. Use tools to enhance and extend activities and promote pro-social behavior

5. Have fun offline
5 tips for media mentors

1. Guide the way
2. Emphasize technology tools that encourage pro-social behaviors, interactions, relationships, and joint engagement
3. Give your child choices and control
4. Help your child progress from media consumers to media creators
5. Promote digital media literacy (yours and theirs)
5 things parents need from media mentors

1. A good role model and tour guide
2. A trusted source
3. Resources and recommendations
4. Opportunities for parent play time
5. Tips for promoting a healthy media diet and positive family media ecology at home
What is a healthy media diet?

All screens are not created equal

- Consider screen exposure throughout the day and across settings
- Shift from “how much” they watch to “what they watch”
- Use media “with” rather than “instead of”
- Understand the impact of foreground and background media
- No passive use – interactive + positive interactions + child control
- Emphasize relationships and joint engagement with media
- Update our definition of “screen-time”
Media ecology for a healthy family

- Understand parental influence as the primary media role model
- Be aware of use – when, by who, where, for what and for how long
- Understand that content is as important as length of time
- Find trusted sources of media recommendations
- Place limits on passive use and avoid inappropriate content
- Avoid background TV / No TVs in bedrooms / No media during meals
- Watch together – pro-social content / joint engagement with media
- Be aware of private tech use replacing traditional public use
- Have unplugged time
  “What can we do when we turn off the screen?”
The recipe for parents as media managers, mediators and mentors

- Choose only the highest quality ingredients
- Combine your parenting skills and instincts with knowledge of your child and what you’re learning about appropriate use
- Stir in opportunities for interactions and pro-social behavior
- Blend in relationships and mix in lots of joint engagement with media
- Fold in the 3Cs of quality media – Content, Context, Child
- Bake in your understanding of the reciprocal influence of parents, families, culture and community on children’s media use
- Top with digital media literacy for children, parents and educators
4 (more) tips for parents/families

1. Keep it interactive – Be active while you watch, emphasize adult-child interaction, ask questions, narrate your media use, connect media experiences to children’s “real lives”

2. Match use with age – Children’s needs change as they grow and develop

3. Have fun, stay engaged – Choose media and technology that support active, hands-on, creative and authentic engagement with people and the world around them

4. Promote digital literacy – model appropriate use, model helpful uses of technology tools
Common Sense media resolutions every family should make in 2014

• Make a schedule – make it detailed
• Get to know you’re kid’s favorite device
• Review behavior dos and don’s with Internet first-timers
  – **Do:** Ask your parents if you can go online; have basic social skills; understand a site's rules and know how to flag other users for misbehavior; recognize "red flags" (like if someone asks you personal questions like your name and address).
  – **Don’t:** Go online without a parent's permission; share passwords; pretend to be someone else; share personal details, like name and address; be mean.

• Put cell phones to bed
• Make this the year you stop texting and driving
Three digital resolutions for the new year
Dr. Claire McCarthy, Boston Children’s Hospital

1. Don’t share – be *there* instead
2. Have some designated digital-free times
3. Be thoughtful about how you use it, especially with your children

“*Is this really what I want to be doing, or what I want my child to be doing*”
10 things that can happen when you give your iPad to your kid

1. It becomes a tabletop for snacks
2. Your TV is full of finger swipes
3. You never get your iPad back
4. Child FaceTimes with your coworker
5. Your Facebook profile full of games scores
6. Selfies...lots of selfies
7. Hours spent watching children’s videos
8. Child comes across your old party photos...
9. Folders rearranged with children’s games
10. You get a huge iTunes bill

From splashmath.com
A neighborly reminder...

...Computers can be useful machines, especially when they help people communicate in caring ways with each other...

Dear Mister Rogers, Does It Ever Rain in Your Neighborhood?

...finding the balance
That which is essential is invisible to the eye

“...Let’s not get so fascinated by what the technology can do that we forget what it can’t do...It’s through relationships that we grow best and learn best.”

Fred Rogers