Technology Tips for the Early Years

Brain research tells us that learning happens in safe, positive relationships through interactions between adults and children. How does technology (screens) fit in?

There is a great deal of information about technology, both good and bad. Here are some tips to help you make the best use of technology with your child.

What the experts say

For 0-5 years old, the Canadian Paediatric Society recommends:
- No screen time for children 0-2 years, and less than 1 hour/day for 2-5 years.
- No screens an hour before bedtime.
- Be with your child and involved when using screens.
- Think about when, where, and how you are using screens.
- Let them see you using screens in positive ways, at appropriate times, and putting them away to do other things.

Ask Questions

There are many reasons to use screens. Think about why you use them – it will help you make the best choices for your family.
- Is it for entertainment, learning, or communication?
- Who in the family is using technology? When?
- How is it being used (alone or together, watching or participating)?
- How is learning different when using a screen versus a physical object (e.g. game app versus a board game)?
- Do we have rules around the use of screens? Do we know how much time we spend on technology? Do we have screen-free time?

General Guidelines

Every family is different, so you will need to develop guidelines that work best for you. Here are a few things to remember:
- A child's brain develops the most between 0 and 5 years.
- A child learns best through doing things with others.
- A child also learns by watching what those around them are doing.
- Think about what experts recommend and the questions above, and create a screen-time plan that works for your family.

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Resource:

"Screen time and young children: Promoting health and development in a digital world. Canadian Paediatric Society. 2017. https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children

Choosing Apps

There are so many apps, it is not easy to choose what will be good for your child.

How to start:
- Decide what kind of app you are looking for.
  - Is it for fun and entertainment?
  - Is it to support learning or communication?
  - Can it do both?
  - What kind of topics are you looking for?
- Look for apps from organizations you know and trust.
  - If you don't know them, try to find more information about them.
- Find apps that let both you and your child be involved.
- Check if the app is age appropriate.
- Explore the app yourself and, if it is appropriate, explore and play it with your child.
- As a family, decide how the app fits into your family's screen-time plan.

What to Watch for

- Some apps labelled as early learning or educational may not be particularly educational.
- Avoid apps that try to sell items to your child within the app.

Families Learning and Interacting Together (*Flit*) App
by Centre for Family Literacy

This app provides over 100 specially tailored activities ranging from reading, recipes, rhymes, and games, designed to help you build strong reading, writing, and literacy skills in your child.

Resources:

Common Sense Media:
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/free-educational-apps-games-and-websites

Flit App: Centre for Family Literacy
- iTunes for Apple devices:
  https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/flit-a-family-literacy-app/id1069054876?ls=1&mt=8
- Google Play for Android devices:
  https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.Punchcard.Flit

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