



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by LifeBalance Solutions



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Put the Smart Phone Down!

Parents today are more pressed for time than any other generation of parents—and constantly connected. Largely thanks to the smartphone, parents often find it difficult to separate from their hand-held devices.

Checking your phone has become both habit and necessity to manage work and family life. All this multitasking could also hurt a young child's ability to learn, since children gain communication and social skills through listening, talking, reading, singing, and playing with their parents. These interactions are lost while you are on a smartphone.

Try these ideas to enhance your child's communication skills:

- 1. Play Non-Electronic Games.** Nursery rhymes such as peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake, and Itsy Bitsy Spider promote face-to-face interaction, teach turn-taking, and reinforce essential parts of bonding and conversation.
- 2. Share a Common Focus.** Read a book together, share a toy, look at the same dog in a park. Focusing on the same thing at the same time is called "joint attention." It is a vital part of communication and language development, and also an important social skill, allowing a child to share an experience with another person and see someone else's point of view.
- 3. Send and Receive Nonverbal Messages.** Speaking and understanding words are just one aspect of communication. Non-verbal signals such as eye contact, facial expressions,



gestures, and body language help children recognize emotions and understand the intent of a message.

The development of speech and language skills is strongly linked to thinking ability, social relationships, reading and writing, and school success. This development is fed through consistent verbal and nonverbal interactions between parents and children, so it is important to keep the goal on focused time between you and your child whenever you can.

Does this mean that we need to put down our smartphones completely? Of course not; but nothing takes the place of face-to-face interaction when it comes to our children's learning and speech and language development.

Source: "Parents of Young Children: Put Down Your Smart Phones," by the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Parents-of-Young-Children-Put-Down-Your-Smartphones.aspx>, 2016.

Guidelines for Screen Time

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests the following to help children develop healthy media use habits.

- **For children younger than 18 months**, use of screen media other than video-chatting should be discouraged.
- **Parents of children 18 to 24 months of age** who want to introduce digital media should choose from high-quality programming/apps and use them together with children, because this is how toddlers learn best.
- **For children older than 2 years**, media limits are very appropriate. Limit screen use to no more than 1 hour or less per day of high-quality programming. Co-view or co-play with your children, and find other activities to do together.
- **Designate media-free times together**, such as during family dinners, and media-free zones, such as the bedrooms.
- **Media plans for each child should take into account each child's age**, health, personality, and developmental stage. Remember to communicate your plan to other caregivers, such as babysitters or grandparents, so that media rules are followed consistently.

Source: "Where We Stand: Screen Time," American Academy of Pediatrics, <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Where-We-Stand-TV-Viewing-Time.aspx>

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Technology for Learning and Creativity

During the preschool years, young children are developing a sense of initiative and creativity. They are curious about the world around them and about learning. They are exploring their ability to create and communicate using a variety of media, such as art materials, blocks, dramatic play materials and miniature life figures. They also learn through creative movement, singing, dancing, and using their bodies to represent ideas and experiences. Digital technologies provide one more outlet for them to demonstrate their creativity and learning.

Here are some ways to incorporate technology for learning and creativity:

- Allow your child to freely explore touch screens loaded with a wide variety of developmentally appropriate, interactive media experiences that are well designed and enhance feelings of success.
- Provide opportunities for your child to begin to explore and feel comfortable using “traditional” mouse and keyboard computers to use Websites or look up answers with a search engine.
- Capture photos of block buildings or artwork that your child has created; videotape your child playing or dancing and replay it for your child.



- Record your child’s stories about his drawings or his play. Make digital audio or video files to document his progress.
- Explore digital storytelling with your child. Co-create digital books with photos of your child’s play or work. Attach audio files with your child as narrator.

Always remember, it is best to use technology together. Limit the time your child spends on technology and make sure he or she gets time for more active and different types of play.

Source: “Technology and Young Children,” National Association for the Education of Young Children, <http://www.naeyc.org/content/technology-and-young-children/preschoolers-and-kindergarteners>, retrieved February 10, 2017.

Test Your Knowledge!

- 1) T F Digital technologies provide an outlet for preschoolers to demonstrate their creativity and learning.
- 2) T F In the first three years of life, 80% of a child's brain development occurs.
- 3) T F Toddlers learn best when parents introduce digital media from high-quality programming/apps and use them together.
- 4) T F Children gain communication and social skills through listening, talking, reading, singing, and playing with digital media and television.
- 5) T F Non-verbal signals such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body language help children recognize emotions and understand the intent of a message.

help me



If you have concerns about your child’s growth and development, please talk to your child’s health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

Answers: 1) T, 2) T, 3) T, 4) F, 5) T

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