



# Five Successful Ways to Reduce Screen Time

Kids who spend less time in front of a screen, (TV, video games, or computers), do better in school, read more, sleep better, tend to eat healthier foods and weigh less. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under age 2 have no screen time, and that those older than 2 watch no more than 1 to 2 hours a day of quality programming. Here are some ideas on limiting screen time:

## Make the commitment

Spend time talking with your family about the benefits of reducing the amount of screen time for everyone. Focus on the fact that these changes will give you more time to spend doing fun and creative things together. Some families find it helpful to sign a 'pledge' together. "Turnoff Week" sponsored by The Center for SCREEN-TIME Awareness, is scheduled for September 19 – 25, 2010 and would be a great time to start.

## Have a plan and stick to it.

Figure out how much screen time you spend now and decide how to gradually reduce it. Some families choose specific times (like 4 to 6 PM) as screen-free. Other ideas: put the TV in a place where it isn't the center of attention; take TV's out of bedrooms; turn it off during mealtime and do not have it on as background noise; try not to use screen time as a babysitter.

## Be patient.

Reducing the amount of time that your family spends plugged into screens is a major change. Make this change in small steps rather than in giant leaps. Many children will hardly notice if you gradually decrease their TV or video game time in 15-minute increments.

## Be creative.

Here are some ways to spend screen free hours:

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|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Walk the dog        | Play a musical instrument          |
| Cook                | Play a game                        |
| Dance               | Draw                               |
| Ride a bike         | Build a fort with pillows or boxes |
| Read                | Throw a ball                       |
| Have a conversation | Sing                               |
| Toss a balloon      | Put on a show                      |
| Play Frisbee        |                                    |

## Treasure your time together.

The really good news about screen-free time is that it gives families more opportunities to really be together. You'll get more time to enjoy each other's company while developing habits that will promote good health.