



Looking after little ones is both a privilege and a challenge. With screens everywhere these days, it's easy to feel unsure about what's okay for them and what really helps. It can feel like a bit of a minefield!

New government guidance aims to take some of that pressure off, offering simple, realistic tips to support healthy screen habits for children under five.

This guidance is helpful not only for our foster and adoptive families, but also for the practitioners supporting them through our agencies.

After speaking with over a thousand parents and carers—many of whom wanted clearer advice on how much screen time is too much and how to build healthy habits—the government has responded with practical, judgement-free guidance to support families.

While this guidance focuses on younger children, it's important to remember that excessive screen time can affect children of all ages, impacting sleep, wellbeing, and time for connection, play, and other essential activities.

General Advice

Under 2s: Avoid screen time, except for shared activities that encourage bonding, interaction, and conversation—like video calls with family or looking at photos together.

Ages 2–5: Try to keep it to 1 hour a day—or less if possible.

It's not just about time—what children watch and how they watch it matters too.



Choosing the right content



- Slow-paced, predictable programmes with simple stories are better for young brains.
- Avoid fast, noisy, social media-style videos—they can make it harder for children to focus and learn.
- Use parental controls to block inappropriate content.
- Avoid AI tools and chatbots for young children until more evidence is available.

Watching together

- Watch and talk about content together—it helps children understand what they see and supports learning.
- Keep mealtimes and bedrooms screen-free, and avoid background screens during family time.



Lead by example

Children copy what they see, so be mindful of your own screen use. Even small changes, like putting your phone down during playtime and especially when chatting make a big difference.



Little moments matter

Young children learn best through interaction, play, and everyday experiences.

Too much screen time, especially on their own, can reduce opportunities for:

- Conversation and back-and-forth play
- Developing social and emotional skills
- Problem-solving and language development

Simple Swaps



- Read a story before bed instead of using a screen
- Play a quick game or have a chat at the table
- Encourage drawing, colouring, or imaginative play during the day

Children with additional needs

Some children with SEND may benefit from screen-based tools to support communication or learning. That's fine—but try to keep a balance so screens don't replace play, sleep, or interaction.

Little moments matter

The new guidance is available for free on the **Best Start in Life** parent hub

[Best Start in Life website](#)

[Screen time guidance for under 5s](#)

