

Balancing screen time

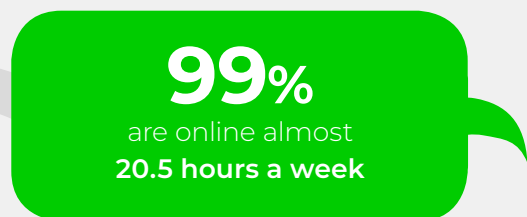
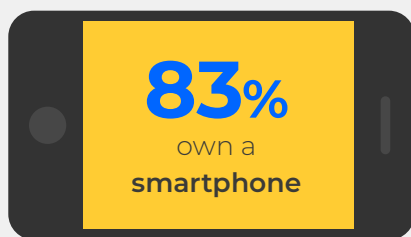
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Top tips to support children 11-14 (Key stage 3)

As children start senior or secondary school and take advantage of their independence, it's likely that they'll be spending a lot more time on their devices. This is a crucial time to talk to them about how to manage their screen time and give them strategies to find a healthy balance between their life on and offline. Find tips and advice to help them do just that.



How are children using screens?



Source: Ofcom Children and Parents
Media use and attitudes report 2018

What do parents say about screen time?

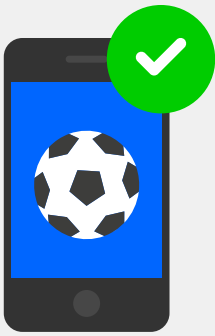
Setting screen time limits

Nearly 9 out of 10 parents take measures to limit their child's use of devices as 54% of parents of 11-13s are concerned about the amount of time their child is spending online.

Screen time and FOMO

Over half of parents of children aged 11-13 feel pressured to allow screen time particularly access to mobile phones so that their child doesn't feel as though they are missing out as they become more independent and start organising their own social lives.

What are the benefits and challenges of screen use?



Screen time benefits

- Screen use provides a range of opportunities for creativity and learning – **70% of parents strongly agree that using devices is essential** for their child's development
Source: [Internet Matters Look both ways report](#).
- Screens can be a great tool to allow children to **maintain relationships** with family and friends.
- **The internet can also be inspirational for children** with a certain passion in particular when discovering content and sharing their own content.

Screen time challenges

- As most children at this age will have their own devices, for parents **it can become increasingly challenging** to stay on top of their screen use.
- As children become more active online, **there is an increased risk that they will be exposed to a range of online issues** such as cyberbullying or oversharing which may negatively impact their digital footprint.
- **Passive screen time** (i.e bingeing on box sets) could have a physical effect on their development (i.e. eyes, brain), sleep cycle and behaviour.



5 top tips to balance screen time



1 Set boundaries to help them build good online habits

Children seek out rules to follow so its best these come from you and not their peers. **Set up a family agreement that you all sign up to**, to manage expectations of what they should and shouldn't be doing online. These boundaries should help them prioritise sleep, face to face interactions and family time to strike a healthy balance.

2 Stay engaged in what they do online

Take an interest in their digital world to better guide them as they become more socially active online and start to draw from friends and online sources to build their identity.

Give them the space to be more independent and build their resilience online to ensure they make smart choices about how they use tech. The more you understand how your child interacts online

and check-in with them about their interest and challenges online, the easier it will be for them to come to you if they are concerned or worried about something.

3 Equip them with know-how to manage risks online

Have regular conversations with them about ways to deal with a range of risks that they may be exposed to such as seeing inappropriate content or being cyberbullied.

Make sure they know when and where to seek help if they need it and what tools they can use to deal with it. Try to reassure them that you won't overreact if they get something wrong.

4 Give them the space to become digitally resilient

As they get older and more confident in their digital world, it's important to

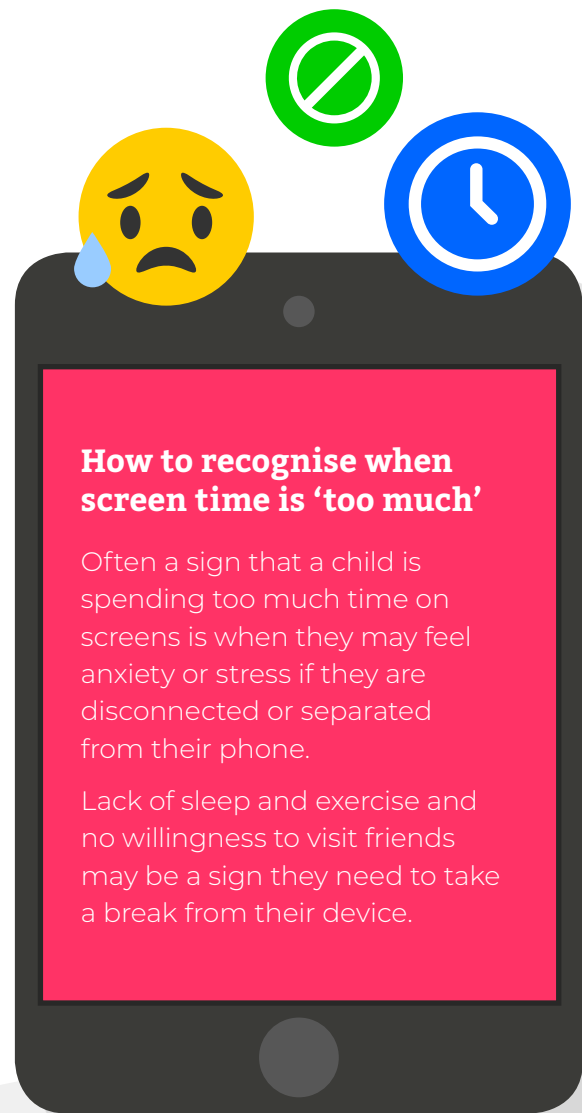
encourage them to be more responsible and aware of how their screen use can impact them and others. Give them the space to thrive online, while also keeping the channels of communications open and being on the lookout for any differences in behaviour that might suggest something isn't quite right is key.

It's a tricky time for young people so it's important to equip them with the tools to make smart decisions and ensure they are able to seek support when they need it most.

5

Encourage children to review when and how they use their screen time with tools

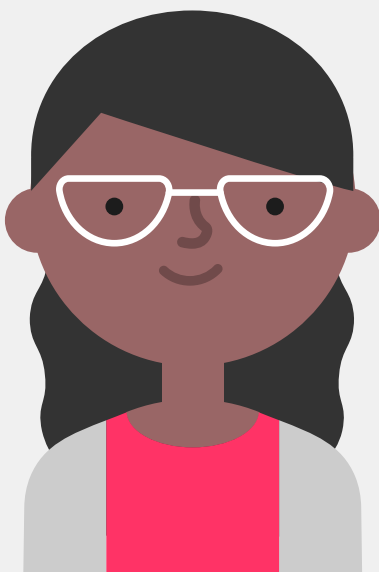
Help young people to make use of the screen-time tools that come with their phone. Most children at this age will say that being more aware of how much time they spend is helpful. They will still need some encouragement to make changes to what they are doing and the amount of time they are spending but it's better that they start to discover and monitor this for themselves where possible.



How to recognise when screen time is 'too much'

Often a sign that a child is spending too much time on screens is when they may feel anxiety or stress if they are disconnected or separated from their phone.

Lack of sleep and exercise and no willingness to visit friends may be a sign they need to take a break from their device.



The truth about screen time

Not all screen time is created equal so it's important to encourage children to have a healthy balance between passive screen time (i.e watching YouTube) and interactive screen time (i.e. creating content or playing games online).

There is no safe level of screen time but it doesn't mean that all screen time is harmful. Lack of evidence has meant that experts have found it hard to recommend a cut-off for children screen time overall.

One size does not fit all when it comes to screen time – it's more about getting it right for your families needs.

Visit internetmatters.org/screentime for more advice

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