# Managing Screen Time

*Technology has become an increasingly present part of our lives and culture. Phones, tablets, apps, social media, texting — they all can captivate kids (and adults) starting at a very young age. How can parents keep screen time healthy? Here are some tips to get you started.*

- **Model Appropriate Screen Use**
  Did you know? According to Common Sense Media, parents of children ages 8-18 spend more than 9 hours per day with screen media. Even before your child has a phone or tablet of her own, lead by example. Minimize the time you spend on devices when with your children. Show interest in non-screen activities. Set times of day that are screen-free, such as family dinner. Remember, your children are always learning from your behaviors, so be the person you want them to be when it comes to screens.

- **Maintain Open Communication**
  Have frequent and open discussions with your kids about their use of social media and devices. Take the time to hear your child's perspective; this will give you a platform to discuss digital issues that are important to you and make him more likely to come to you with his concerns. Cover topics such as showing respect and integrity, keeping personal information private, reporting any concerns about cyberbullying, and thinking before posting.

- **Supervise Your Child**
  Parental monitoring is key to keeping your kids out of trouble, including online:
    o Follow your child on social media sites
    o Ask questions and have an open dialogue about your child's activities
    o Utilize tools to monitor or limit phone/tablet/computer use

- **Remember, Screen Time Is a Privilege, Not a Right**
  Set and clearly communicate screen time rules and limits to your kids:
    o Set time limits for weekdays and weekends.
    o Be clear about which devices count as screen time; you may also want to set different limits based on the device (e.g., phone, video games, computer).
    o Set a "digital curfew" for when devices will be shut off. Shutting devices off at least an hour before bedtime can help promote healthier sleep.
  You can also utilize screen time to encourage positive behavior; kids can earn additional screen time for engaging in specific positive behaviors, and they can lose screen time privileges (in small doses) if they do not practice appropriate screen use.

*For more on establishing a media plan for your family and setting healthy limits on screens, visit the American Academic of Pediatrics (healthychildren.org) and Common Sense Media (commonsensemedia.org).*

The Child Mind Institute is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Our teams work every day to deliver the highest standards of care, advance the science of the developing brain, and empower parents, professionals and policymakers to support children when and where they need it most. Together with our supporters, we're helping children reach their full potential in school and in life. Learn more at childmind.org.