

PAUSE TO PLAY

Tips for Parents

The 24-Hour Guidelines for school-aged children recommend that recreational screen time be restricted to a maximum of two hours per day, and that sitting for extended periods be limited [1]. Examples of recreational screen time include computer or Internet use, television viewing and video gaming.

TIPS TO REDUCE RECREATIONAL SCREEN TIME

- 1. Place clear limits on recreational screen time.** Set a house rule together that your children can have no more than a certain amount of recommended recreational screen time per day. **Enforce the rule** once it's made. Set a timer to alert your child when it's time to turn off the screen.
- 2. Set a good example.** Be a role model and limit your own screen time. If children see you following your own rules, then they'll be more likely to do the same.
- 3. Avoid using screens as a reward or punishment.** By using screen time as a reward for good behaviour or a punishment for bad behaviour, we make screen time seem more important and desirable to children.
- 4. Turn screens off during meals.** Make mealtime family time. Research shows that families who eat together tend to eat healthier meals and helps to improve self-esteem and communication skills in children. Use mealtime as a time to talk about your day or plan an activity that you can do as a family.
- 5. Create screen-free bedrooms.** Remove all screens from your child's bedroom. Children who have screens in their room tend to have more screen time than those that don't. Plus, it keeps them in their room instead of spending time with the rest of the family
- 6. Offer fun alternatives to recreational screen time.** Often children watch screens because they don't know what else to do. If you want your child to turn off the screen, suggest alternatives like playing a boardgame, starting a game of hide and seek, or playing outside.



¹ Canadian 24-hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth

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TIPS FOR OUTDOOR PLAY

1. **Get them outside.** When children are outside, they move more, sit less and play longer [2].
2. **Make play “as safe as necessary,” not “as safe as possible” [3].** Being active in outdoor play may involve the risk of physical injury, but children benefit from these opportunities for challenge, testing limits, exploring boundaries and learning about injury. Children are natural risk-takers and thrill-seekers. Your role is to remove known hazards and teach children to manage their own risks.
3. **Provide loose parts for children to play with.** Loose parts are moveable materials that children can use to design, create, and play with to help use their imagination and bring a sense of adventure and excitement to their play. These include bought materials, upcycled materials from the recycling bin or found natural objects, such as wooden planks, rocks, bricks, tires, large sticks, pinecones or pieces of rope and tape.
4. **Be aware of the weather.** Consider the temperature, humidex, wind chill, UV index, air quality index and weather warnings. Being dressed for the weather is the first step to enjoying the outdoors. For tips, check out york.ca/healthyschools
5. **Give them unstructured play time.** Unstructured play (also called free play) is that set of activities that children create on their own without adult guidance or supervision. Unstructured play is important because it gives them a sense of freedom and control, and allows them to learn about themselves, and make mistakes without feeling any pressure or failure. How do you incorporate more unstructured play time?
 - a. Balance extra-curricular activities with free time
 - b. Practice letting your children be bored
 - c. Have age-appropriate toys on hand, a big enough space and plenty of time

Screen-free activities to try:

- ✓ Get outside to play in snow, i.e., tobogganing
- ✓ Explore your local park or forest
- ✓ Go outside for a walk
- ✓ Go for a bike ride
- ✓ Skipping or jumping
- ✓ Have a picnic in the park
- ✓ Check out [Active for Life](#) and try the fun activities
- ✓ Download and play this active [fortune teller](#) game



For more information, visit york.ca/healthyschools

² 2020 ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth

³ [Int J Environ Res Public Health](#). 2012 Sep; 9(9): 3134–3148.