Screen Time

Prompt

As technology has become more common in our daily lives, humans are interacting with computer screens at a higher rate than ever before. Portable devices like laptops, tablets, handheld gaming systems, and especially smartphones have remarkably increased the amount of time teenagers are staring at computer screens. As a result, the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended a limit of two hours of screen time per day for teenagers.

After examining the potential benefits and risks of screen time in the sources provided, write an essay arguing whether or not the AAP should keep the recommended two-hour limit of daily screen time for teenagers or eliminate it. Defend your position using clear reasons and relevant evidence from the sources provided, and be sure to acknowledge and address counterclaims to your position.

Source 1

"Media Benefits for Children and Teenagers"
By Lee Burton and The Raising Children Network, *raisingchildren.net.au*

Media benefits and child development

There are many negative messages about media, and how viewing and interacting with it might harm children.

But children can also benefit from media. The benefits depend on how old children are, and what kind and quality of media they're using.

Young children

If your child is aged under two years, using media with an adult can help keep him connected with people he loves – for example, a fly-in fly-out parent. But if your child is aged under 18 months, he should use media only for video-chatting. If he's aged 18 months to 2 years, he should use media only when you or another adult can use it with him.

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Older children and teenagers

If your child is older, carefully chosen TV programs, movies, apps and computer games can offer many developmental and social benefits. These can have more value through middle and later childhood. Also, social media can have social benefits for teenagers.

How media can benefit children

Younger children can get developmental benefits from using media. These benefits include:

- literacy skills – for example, children can start learning letters of the alphabet through programs like Play School and Sesame Street, or through educational computer games and apps like Teach Your Monster to Read

- numeracy skills – for example, children can start learning to count or identify shapes through programs like Sesame Street and Play School

- social skills – for example, children can start learning how to cooperate by watching TV programs and using computer games and apps that show helping behaviour. Examples include apps like Toca's Tea Party and websites like ABC for Kids.

For older children, the developmental benefits of media include:

- intellectual benefits – for example, children can develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills by playing computer games designed to develop these skills, or they can develop ethical thinking by comparing family values with values in fiction or documentaries

- educational benefits – for example, TV shows and movies based on books can encourage children to read

- social benefits – for example, joining online clubs can help children practise using social media safely, or playing computer games with friends and family can help them practise turn-taking and cooperation

- creative benefits – for example, children can develop skills in imagination, art, video-modelling, music and media by using software and apps like My Story or Bubl Draw, or they might be inspired to make something by a TV show.

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Media can help teenagers develop:

- reading, writing and critical thinking skills – for example, by using blogs and chat rooms

- social skills – for example, by connecting with others on social media

- political and social awareness – for example, by watching news, current affairs and documentaries, or by reading about issues online

- values – for example, by observing good role models in the media.

Children can be media creators, not just consumers. Making their own movies, taking photographs, and creating online content can help them develop critical thinking, social, technical and artistic skills. This can also make them aware that their opinions and decisions matter.

Helping your child get media benefits

You can help your child get media benefits by being involved with your child and her use of media – for example, you can visit quality websites together, encourage your child to use educational software, and watch TV shows that offer extra learning opportunities.

When you're watching TV and movies together, try discussing how the plot works, how your child feels about what's happening, and what would happen in real life if you behaved badly or illegally.

You can also talk about how the people are actors, and how special effects make things seem to happen.

News programs can upset or worry children. You might choose not to share news programs with children under 8 years. For children aged 9-12 years, it's a good idea to watch news together so you can talk to your child about news that he might find disturbing.

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Deciding what media is 'good'

Deciding whether a TV program, movie, computer game, app or website is good quality can be tricky.

You can find out about classifications at Australian Classification. And you can use online reviews to help you decide whether a movie, app or game is high quality and whether it has educational benefits. You could try:

- our movie reviews

- Australian Council on Children and the Media – App reviews

- Common Sense Media.

Other parents and your child's teachers can also be a useful source of information about quality media that's good for kids.

Content with a good story that doesn't depend on violence for its entertainment value is always worth looking for.

You can also look for TV programs and movies that give your child the chance to find out about new things like places, animals, people, ideas, issues and cultures she couldn't see or connect with otherwise. These can inspire her to try new activities and think about new ideas. This can be done through playing, creating something or finding out more about a topic.

Movies or TV programs with good role models can also positively influence your child. Good role models are people or characters who are doing things or behaving in ways that you wouldn't mind your child copying, or that you'd like your child to copy.

Some movies and TV programs can expose your child to diversity, especially ethnic diversity, which is a good thing.

Software, apps and websites that get children drawing pictures or making up stories or rhymes can foster creativity. For preschoolers especially, this can also be a way for them to express ideas and feelings.

Computer games that give young children simple choices – choosing a character or finding a background for a picture – can also help your child make creative decisions. The more

interactive computer games and websites are, the better they'll be at helping your child learn more effectively.

Avatars and games can give older children and teenagers the opportunity to develop identity and empathy by letting them 'try on' different physical and psychological characteristics.

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/media_benefits.html

Source 2

"Kids and Screen time: What Does the Research Say?"
By Juana Summers, *NPR.org* , August 28, 2014

Kids are spending more time than ever in front of screens, and it may be inhibiting their ability to recognize emotions, according to new research out of the University of California, Los Angeles.

The study, published in the journal Computers in Human Behavior, found that sixth-graders who went five days without exposure to technology were significantly better at reading human emotions than kids who had regular access to phones, televisions and computers.

The UCLA researchers studied two groups of sixth-graders from a Southern California public school. One group was sent to the Pali Institute, an outdoor education camp in Running Springs, Calif., where the kids had no access to electronic devices. For the other group, it was life as usual.

At the beginning and end of the five-day study period, both groups of kids were shown images of nearly 50 faces and asked to identify the feelings being modeled. Researchers found that the students who went to camp scored significantly higher when it came to reading facial emotions or other nonverbal cues than the students who continued to have access to their media devices.

"We were pleased to get an effect after five days," says Patricia Greenfield, a senior author of the study and a distinguished professor of psychology at UCLA. "We found that the kids who had been to camp without any screens but with lots of those opportunities and necessities for interacting with other people in person improved significantly more."

If the study were to be expanded, Greenfield says, she'd like to test the students at camp a third time — when they've been back at home with smartphones and tablets in their hands for five days.

"It might mean they would lose those skills if they weren't maintaining continual face-to-face interaction," she says.

A Wake-Up Call For Educators

There's a big takeaway for schools, Greenfield says.

"A lot of school systems are rushing to put iPads into the hands of students individually, and I don't think they've thought about the [social] cost," she explains. "This study should be, and we want it to be, a wake-up call to schools. They have to make sure their students are getting enough face-to-face social interaction. That might mean reducing screen time."

The results of the UCLA study seem to line up with prior research, says Marjorie Hogan, a pediatrician at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis and a spokeswoman for the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

"Common sense tells me that if a child's laying on his or her bed and texting friends instead of getting together and saying, 'Hey, what's up,' that there's a problem there," she says. "I want people interacting ... on a common-sense level, and an experiential level. It does concern [me]."

Hogan relates the UCLA study's findings back to research on infants.

"When babies are babies, they're learning about human interaction with face-to-face time and with speaking to parents and having things they say modeled back to them," she says. "That need doesn't go away."

How Much Screen Time Is Too Much?

For decades the AAP has warned that children need to cut back on their screen time. The group's latest prescription: Entertainment "screen time" should be limited to two hours a day for children ages 3-18. And, for 2-year-olds and younger, none at all.

The sixth-graders who made up the sample in the UCLA study self-reported that they spent an average of more than four hours on a typical school day texting, watching television and playing video games.

The San Francisco nonprofit Common Sense Media studies screen time from birth and, in 2013, found that children under 8 (a younger sample than the kids in the UCLA study) were spending roughly two hours a day in front of a screen.

"If used appropriately, it's wonderful," Hogan says of digital media. "We don't want to demonize media, because it's going to be a part of everybody's lives increasingly, and we have to teach children how to make good choices around it, how to limit it and how to make sure it's not going to take the place of all the other good stuff out there."

Some research suggests that screen time can have lots of negative effects on kids, ranging from childhood obesity and irregular sleep patterns to social and/or behavioral issues.

"We really need to be sure that children, and probably older people, are getting enough face-to-face interaction to be competent social beings," Greenfield says. "Our species evolved in an environment where there was only face-to face- interaction. Since we were adapted to that environment, it's likely that our skills depend on that environment. If we reduce face-to-face interaction drastically, it's not surprising that the social skills would also get reduced."

What About 'Educational Screen Time'?

Research out of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, a nonprofit research and production institute affiliated with the Sesame Workshop, suggests that less than half the time kids between the ages of 2 and 10 spend in front of screens is spent consuming "educational" material.

The center also looked at family income as a determining factor of screen time. Lower-income families reported that their children spent more time engaging with educational screen activities than higher-income families did. Fifty-seven percent of screen time for families earning less than $25,000 was education-focused, compared with 38 percent for families earning between $50,000 to $99,000.

How To Limit Kids' Screen Time?

Of course, as media multiplies, it's increasingly difficult to manage kids' screen time. Where several decades ago, television was the only tech distraction, kids now have smartphones, tablets and laptops — not to mention electronic games.

"We need to make media a part of our lives, but in a planned, sensible way," Hogan says.

Her suggestion: Families should encourage a "healthy media diet" for their children. Parents and kids should work together to decide how much time to spend with media every day, and to make sure good choices are being made about what media to take in.

Source 3

Pros and Cons of Kids Using Digital Technology

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feQJndK_z6o