

Living with screens



How can children, screens and
parents live together successfully?

A **guide** for parents

Tips on how to support
your children's use of screens

ANGLAIS

action
innocence



For the past few years, screens and new technologies have been part of our daily lives. As parents, we use them for communication, work and entertainment. Our children are also exposed to screens, both through our own use and later theirs, as they gain their own experience. Depending on their age, they may start playing video games and using the Internet and social media.

With all this digital media exposure, how can we help our children develop healthy, safe and responsible practices? How can we maintain a balance within our families?

Here is some guidance from Action Innocence to help your children through this learning process.

Presentation of the Foundation

Established in 1999, Action Innocence is a Geneva-based Foundation that aims to promote a healthy and moderate use of screens. Along with conducting large-scale public awareness campaigns, the Foundation provides in-school interventions, creates prevention materials, and develops training programs for education and health care professionals.

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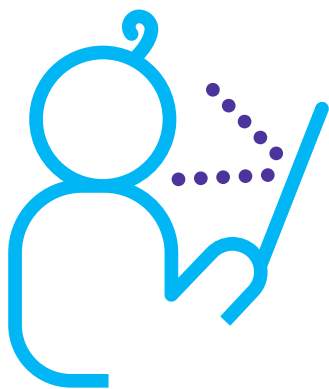
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Healthy use of screens in early childhood (0-6 years)



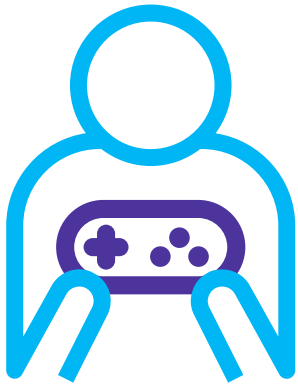
- Try to avoid screens if your child is under 3.
- Focus on free play, physical exercise and interactions with others.
- Set rules for screen use from an early age.
- Observe the age recommendations on programmes, games and apps.
- Choose the content your children watch based on the age of the youngest viewer.
- Focus on interactive content.
- Watch the content with your child and discuss it with them.
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- Do not expose your child to screens during meals or before bedtime.
- Limit your own use of screens in your child's presence.

Screens should not prevent your child from:

- exploring their surroundings.
- being physically active.
- using their five senses.
- interacting with their social environment.
- developing their language skills.
- playing with other children.
- being creative.
- using their imagination.



Your child plays video games



Keep in mind that video games offer your child the opportunity to:

- enjoy themselves and have fun.
- develop new skills.
- make progress and win.
- feel valued.
- play with their friends and classmates.
- share experiences with others.

Take interest in the content:

- Before buying a video game, find information online and from other parents.
- Learn about the content and recommended age at www.pegi.info.
- Check the duration of the game.
- Note that in-game purchases are included in some games.



Be aware that your child can play on online gaming platforms that allow them to:

- chat with people they do not necessarily know in real life.
- send them messages, pictures and videos.

Teach your child to protect themselves:

- It is important to protect their personal information and privacy.
- It is essential to use different passwords, regularly change them and keep them secret.
- What your child posts (e.g. photos, videos, messages, etc.) remains online permanently and shapes their e-reputation (the way others perceive them).
- Any personal information they post may be used against them.
- The people they meet on the Internet can lie. We never know who is hiding behind a screen.
- Some online content is not appropriate to their age and may shock them.



Make it clear to your child that laws apply to the Internet:

- Under the law, users are prohibited from:
 - insulting or threatening a person online.
 - damaging a person's reputation.
 - publishing a photo or video of a person without their consent.
- If your child finds themselves in one of these situations, they can file a complaint.
- Your child must also comply with the law: in Switzerland, children can be held criminally liable for their actions from the age of 10.

Set rules:

- Set a time limit for screen use to make sure that your child can:
 - stay physically active.
 - have enough sleep.
 - enjoy a range of activities.
- Discuss the rules with your child.
- Suggest writing down the rules and putting them up where your child can see them.
- Adapt the rules according to your child's age.
- Talk about the consequences of breaking the rules.



To help you maintain a consistent approach:

- Remember that you set rules and limits for your child's well-being.
- Teach your child to manage their emotions when they play and when it's time for them to stop.
- Set up parental controls.
- Use a timer to limit the duration of the game.
- Reduce your own screen time to set an example.
- Take the time to watch your child play. Encourage and compliment them.
- Play video games with them.



You have reasons for concern if your child:

- spends more and more time playing video games and neglects their other activities.
- is often angry when they cannot play or when they have to stop playing.
- often misses school.
- is getting lower grades.
- is sleep deprived.
- becomes aggressive.
- becomes isolated and withdrawn.



Your child uses the Internet and social media



Remember that online activities offer your child the opportunity to:

- stay in touch with their friends.
- take part in discussions that are important to them.
- be valued and acknowledged.
- develop their creativity and imagination.
- research topics of interest.
- learn.

Teach your child to protect themselves:

- It is important to protect their personal information and privacy.
- It is essential to use different passwords, regularly change them and keep them secret.
- What your child posts (e.g. photos, videos, messages, etc.) remains online permanently and shapes their e-reputation (the way others perceive them).
- Any personal information they post may be used against them.
- The people they meet on the Internet can lie. We never know who is hiding behind a screen.
- Some online content is not appropriate to their age and may shock them.
- If a photo of your child is posted without their consent, they have the right to ask for the photo to be deleted.



Make it clear to your child that laws apply to the Internet:

- Under the law, users are prohibited from:
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 - damaging a person's reputation.
 - publishing a photo or video of a person without their consent.
- If your child finds themselves in one of these situations, they can file a complaint.
- Your child must also comply with the law: in Switzerland, children can be held criminally liable for their actions from the age of 10.

Guide your child:

- Help them configure their privacy settings on social media.
- Learn about the apps your child downloads.
- Be sensitive to their concerns and questions and guide them if they find themselves in difficulty.
- Reduce your own screen time to set an example.



Set rules:

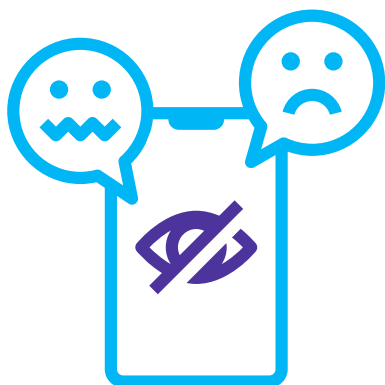
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- Suggest writing down the rules and putting them up where your child can see them.
- Adapt the rules according to your child's age.
- Talk about the consequences of breaking the rules.

You have reasons for concern if your child:

- spends more and more time online and neglects their other activities.
- spends less time with their friends.
- often misses school.
- is getting lower grades.
- is sleep deprived.
- becomes aggressive.
- becomes isolated and withdrawn.



Exposure to violent and pornographic content



In their daily use of digital technology, your child may be exposed to violent or sexually explicit materials.

This type of content may appear:

- in a message (e-mail, instant messaging apps, etc.).
- during an online search.
- on social media.
- when your child is playing a video game or watching a series or a film that is not appropriate to their age.

Teach your child to protect themselves:

- It is important not to click on links sent by strangers by email, messaging or on social media.
- During an online search, inappropriate content may appear even if the subject is unrelated to violent or pornographic content.
- On social media, inappropriate content may appear in their news feed.

Guide your child:

- Take an interest in the people (influencers) and content that your child follows online and on social media.
- Make it clear to your child that they can talk to you at any time, even if they are embarrassed by the content that they see.
- Advise them to start identifying trusted people (teachers, school nurses, etc.) who can help them.
- Where appropriate for their age, install parental controls.



Explain to your child why they should not share this type of content:

- Violent or pornographic content may offend others.
- This type of content may be illegal; possessing or sharing it may be punishable by law.
- In Switzerland, your child is criminally liable for their actions from the age of 10.

You have reasons for concern if your child:

- spends more and more time online or, on the contrary, avoids going online.
- often misses school.
- is getting lower grades.
- often has headaches or stomach aches.
- is sleep deprived.
- becomes aggressive.
- becomes isolated and withdrawn.



If you think that your child has come across violent or pornographic content:

- Listen to them and encourage them to talk.
- Help them understand what they have seen and reassure them:
 - Allow them to express their emotions. Your child may feel fear, anxiety, disgust, embarrassment, etc.
 - Do not be judgmental.
 - Give your child explanations that correspond to their age and language level. The younger they are, the simpler the words should be.
 - Give general explanations and allow your child to ask questions themselves. This will allow them to identify exactly their questions and worries.

What does the law say?

- Representations of acts of violence, art. 135, section 1 and 2, Swiss Criminal Code
- Pornography, art. 197, section 1, Swiss Criminal Code



Bullying and cyberbullying among students



In their day-to-day life, your child may be exposed to bullying while interacting with other young people, for example at school, during extracurricular activities or on their way to school. Bullying is defined as repeated aggression such as mocking, insulting, humiliating, shoving, hitting, exclusion, etc. Bullying is a group dynamic that can last for long periods of time. The victim is isolated and unable to defend themselves.

Cyberbullying

Digital media use leads to a wider and faster dissemination of information, unrestricted by place or time (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). This can amplify cases of bullying.

Bullying and cyberbullying can have serious adverse effects on the physical and psychological well-being of the child.

Support your child:

- Make it clear to them that they can talk to you at any time.
- Advise them to identify other trusted adults in school and in their entourage who they can talk to (teachers, school nurses, etc.).
- Explain that they will never be responsible for any mockery they might experience.
- Tell them that you are there to protect them should they be threatened with retaliation.



You have reasons for concern if your child:

- is constantly late for class. Late arrivals may be due to a strategy to avoid classmates in the schoolyard or hallways.
- no longer wants to engage in one of their extracurricular activities.
- often misses school.
- is getting lower grades.
- often has headaches or stomach aches.
- is sleep deprived.
- suffers from eating disorders.
- becomes aggressive.
- becomes isolated and withdrawn.
- shows signs of low self-esteem.



If your child is a victim of bullying or cyberbullying:

- Ask them to describe the situation they are experiencing.
- Listen to them without judgement.
- Ask them if you can take a look at the messages, photos and videos published on the Internet without their consent.
- Inform their teacher and school administration of the situation so they can deal with it as early as possible and stop it.
- Remember that, depending on the situation, the law can protect your child.
- With your child's consent, collect and keep evidence (photos or screenshots of the content).
- You can call the nearest police department to report the situation.
- Depending on the advice of the police:
 - Go to the police department with or without your child, with the evidence.
 - File a complaint.
 - Report the content and/or block the accounts of bullies.



To help you maintain a consistent approach:

- Remember that your child is a victim; making them feel guilty will not solve the situation and will prevent them from feeling confident enough to tell you and give you as much information as possible.
- Be patient; your child will need time to report what happened to them.
- Offer your child the opportunity to receive psychological support.

If your child witnesses bullying or cyberbullying:

- Tell them that they can play a key role in helping adults identify the situation and get it under control.
 - Invite them to talk to you or to a trusted adult in their school.
 - Ask them not to participate in the bullying.
 - Encourage them to express support for the victim.
 - If your child is afraid of retaliation for disagreeing with the situation, advise them to talk to their friends to see if they can act as a group.



What does the law say?

The following legislation could be referred to when filing a complaint:

- Protection of legal personality / Against infringements, art. 28, section 1, Swiss Civil Code
- Defamation, art. 173, section 1, Swiss Criminal Code
- Wilful defamation, art. 174, section 1 and 2, Swiss Criminal Code
- Insult, art. 177, section 1, Swiss Criminal Code
- Threatening behaviour, art. 180, section 1, Swiss Criminal Code



Harmful online encounters, grooming



As a parent, keep in mind that your child may meet strangers on the Internet. One of the risks they may face is grooming.

What is grooming?

Grooming means contacting and seeking to establish a relationship with children and teenagers who are under the legal age of sexual consent (16 years old) to achieve sexual pleasure or to have a relationship of a sexual nature.

How is the first contact made?

Grooming can occur in several ways. In most cases, an individual may first try to contact a child using an online service. For example, they may try to join a discussion on a social network, a chat room or an online video game platform, while maintaining their identity or pretending to be the child's age.



Building trust:

The person may try to establish a relationship of trust with the child.

For instance, they may:

- ask questions about the child's favourite video games, or about topics they follow on the Internet and social media.
- develop a relationship around topics of common interest.
- gradually ask the child how they are feeling, try to find out if they are having difficulties in their friendships or in their relationship with their parents.
- if the child is in difficulty, acknowledge their feelings.
- position themselves as a trusted confidant.

Once trust has been built up and a friendship or romantic relationship has been established, the person may seek to ask more intimate questions.

Questions may include:

- Do you like to sleep naked?
- Have you ever kissed someone?
- Do you wear bras or thongs?
- Do you have pubic hair?
- Are your breasts growing?
- Have you ever measured your penis?



If the child lets their guard down, the person may try to proceed further by:

- asking the child to send intimate pictures.
- sending pictures of their own genitals.
- suggesting an online meeting (for example, a video session).
- suggesting a face-to-face meeting.

You have reasons for concern if your child:

- spends more and more time online and neglects their other activities.
- spends less time with their friends.
- often talks to someone you do not know.
- quickly switches their screen image if you are nearby.
- receives letters, parcels or phone calls from people you do not know.
- has money that you did not give them or clothes and accessories that you did not buy them.
- often misses school.
- is getting lower grades.
- becomes aggressive.
- becomes isolated and withdrawn.
- shows signs of low self-esteem.



If you think that your child is a victim of grooming:

- Tell them about your fears and worries.
- Ask them for more details about the relationship they have built.
- Listen without judgement.
- Ask them if you can see their conversations with the person.
- Remember that, depending on the situation, the law can protect your child.
- With their consent, collect and keep evidence (photos or screenshots of the person's and your child's profile, and content that they have shared).
- You can call the nearest police department to report the situation.
- Depending on the advice of the police:
 - Go to the police department with or without your child, with the evidence.
 - File a complaint.
 - Report and/or block the person's account.



To help you maintain a consistent approach:

- Remember that your child is a victim; making them feel guilty will not solve the situation and will prevent them from feeling confident enough to tell you and give you as much information as possible.
- Be aware that it may be difficult for your child to accept the end of a friendship or romantic relationship that they may believe to have been genuine and sincere.
- Take the time to explain to your child that:
 - what the person is doing is illegal, which is why you are asking for police assistance.
 - the law is there to protect them.
- Offer your child the opportunity to receive psychological support.



What does the law say?

The following legislation could be referred to when filing a complaint:

- Sexual acts with children, art. 187, Swiss Criminal Code
- Pornography, art. 197, section 1, 3, 4 or 5, Swiss Criminal Code
- Threatening behaviour, art. 180, section 1, Swiss Criminal Code
- Coercion, article 181, Swiss Criminal Code
- Extortion, article 156, Swiss Criminal Code



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