



Media Guidelines for Parents

The most important recommendations for using smartphones, computers, game consoles and TV in the family

Many parents are unsure how to properly support their children in the digital age:

Convenient solution

Dealing with tablets, smartphones, PCs, game consoles, TVs, etc. in the family is a particularly difficult issue for many parents. Because some things are convenient in the short term, but harmful for children in the long term.

Help yourself!

Making the right decisions in everyday life is challenging. But parents can do a lot to ensure the healthy development of their children and help avoid the dangers of screen media.

Dangerous consequences

Excessive use of screen media can lead to sleep disorders, difficulty concentrating, loss of empathy, poor school performance and internet and computer game addiction.

6 Rules from Small to Large

0-3 years

Up to three: screen-free!

3-6 years

Maximum 30 minutes on individual days and with an adult!

6-9 years

Maximum 30-45 minutes on individual days and with an adult!

9-12 years

Maximum 45-60 minutes of leisure screen use!

12-16 years

Maximum 2 hours of leisure screen use!

16-18 years

Guideline value: Still a maximum of 2 hours of leisure use!



Up to three: screen free!

0–3

This means

Babies and toddlers should, if possible, not spend any time at all in front of screen media such as smartphones, tablets, games consoles and televisions.

Also important

The less the little ones watch others using screen media, the better (examples: a big brother on the cell phone, a sister in front of the TV, mom or dad on the smartphone).

Tip

If you as a parent urgently need to use a screen device, for example to read an email, it is best to choose a time when the baby or toddler is not around.



Maximum 30 minutes on individual days and with an adult!

3–6



This means

At kindergarten age, screen time should be kept to a minimum, as children benefit most from movement and experiences in the real world.

Also important

When it comes to their first experiences with screen media, children need rules and parental supervision. Limit the time (maximum half an hour on individual days, with screen-free days in between), and do not leave your child alone in front of the screen. This way, small children learn rules that will help avoid a lot of stress and arguments in the years to come.

Tip

Many children lose track of time when they are watching a screen! An hourglass or stopwatch will help your child understand how quickly time passes. Or you can set a time limit software. Then the device will switch itself off (medien-kindersicher.de).

**Maximum 30–45 minutes
on individual days and
with an adult!**

6–9



This means

Many schools require children to use computers or tablets for homework. Outside of homework, primary school children should not spend more than half an hour to three quarters of an hour per day using screen media.

Also important

Make sure you keep a clear distinction: Is your child actually doing homework? Or are they watching films, playing on the computer or tablet?

Tip
The use of screen media in your free time should be limited to individual days to avoid becoming a habit. In addition, children should continue to be supervised by adults when using their devices.

**Maximum of 45–60 minutes
of leisure screen use!**

9–12

This means

Own game console: Not before nine years! Children with their own devices spend on average twice as much time playing computer games as children without their own game console.

Also important

When children have their own devices, it is more difficult for parents to regulate what the child plays and for how long. Use the content together with the children whenever possible.

Tip

Keep the game console in a locked cupboard. This way, you as a parent can decide how your child is using it and avoid the stress that comes from constantly saying no and imposing restrictions. Out of sight, out of mind!



Maximum of 2 hours of leisure screen use!

12–16

This means

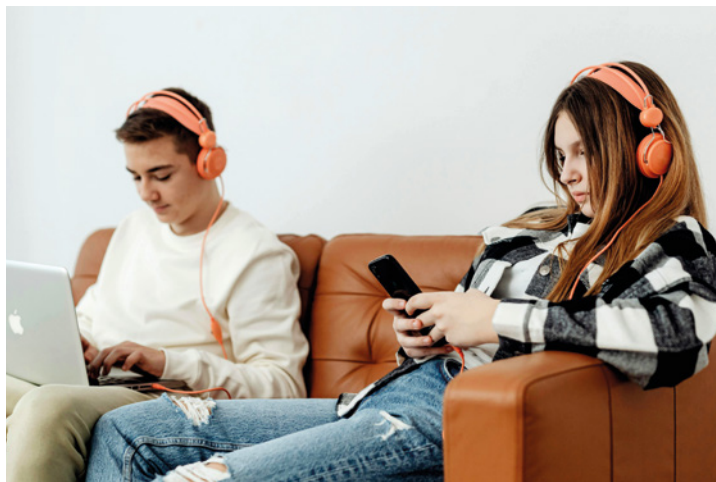
Own smartphone: Not before 12 years!
At this age, internet use must be supervised. Pay attention to the age recommendations and also check the suitability of the content for your own child.

Also important

Have regular discussions with young people to reflect on media time and content. Observe how media consumption affects concentration, behavior, fitness and school grades.

Tip

This is the liability situation:
You as parents are the owners of the device and the mobile phone contract and offer it to the child for use.



Orientation value: Still a maximum of 2 hours of leisure use!

16–18

This means

Even 16 to 18 year olds may find it difficult to limit their screen media consumption to a healthy level. In some cases, they still need intensive support in taking on digital responsibility.

Also important

Digital media can affect health and lead to addiction.

Tip

Build a network of trusted people who can serve as a point of contact in case of difficulties.



10 Recommendations for Children and Adolescents of All Ages

1. Interest and support of parents

Parents don't have to find everything their children do on the screen exciting or right. But it is very important to keep asking questions and show interest: "What are you playing right now? How does it work? Explain to me what is important to you." The same applies afterwards: "How was the film? What did you like? What was difficult for you?" If parents notice something that they don't like or that worries them, they should address it calmly and honestly. For example: "You missed soccer practice because you were so engrossed in the game. That worries me." It strengthens children when mothers or fathers keep talking to them even in difficult situations.

Tip

Watch films together or play computer games together. If a child gets scared, you can switch off and talk together about what happened.

2. No reward, punishment or reassurance

Screen media should not be used to reward, punish or calm down. Is reward or punishment even necessary? Many small children go along with what their parents do. Many older children understand well when you explain to them in words: "Please don't do that, it could harm you." Or: "Please do that right now, otherwise we'll miss the bus."

Tip

Think ahead and create alternatives: For example, have a favorite toy to calm the child down or colored pencils to keep them busy.



3. Not while eating!

When eating, especially when eating together as a family, the television, smartphones and other screen media should be turned off. Do not eat while watching films or playing computer games.

4. Media-free periods!

In everyday family life, there should be periods of time that are completely media-free.

Tip

Put your phone out of sight more often and practice putting your smartphone in airplane mode or on silent as often as possible.

5. Joint activities

When engaging in shared activities, avoid using digital devices as much as possible.

Tip

Leave your devices in the car when you go on trips, or leave them at home altogether. If necessary, you can carry a smartphone in flight mode or on silent mode.



6. Healthy sleep!

Children need to be able to sleep well and undisturbed. Screen devices disrupt sleep. Therefore, no digital devices such as cell phones, TVs, computers or similar should be left in the children's room at night. In addition, children should not use screen devices at least an hour before going to bed.

Tip

Choose a storage location for all of the family's mobile devices, such as a box („cell phone hotel“) in the living room. In the evening, put all of the devices in there to „sleep over.“

7. Secure Internet access!

On the Internet, inappropriate, disturbing and traumatizing content for children is always just a click away. That's why it's important to know about Internet access controls and to use them to protect children. Children under the age of 9 should not use the Internet at all, and children under the age of 16 should only use it under supervision.

Tip

At [medien-kindersicher.de](https://www.medien-kindersicher.de) you will find many instructions on protecting children from devices and services and on securing Internet access.

8. School: In person if possible!

Face-to-face teaching is best for the development of the vast majority of children. On average, less is learned in digital distance learning.

Therefore

Teachers should offer face-to-face lessons whenever possible. Parents should keep children who are ill for a short period of time at home and avoid distance learning. Digital distance learning can be helpful for young people who are ill for a long period of time and cannot go to school.

9. Parents and siblings are role models!

Children imitate a lot of what they see the “grown-ups” do. This is especially true for small children. But it is also the case for teenagers. You should always ask yourself: “Am I a good role model right now? Can the child learn from me how to use smartphones, TVs, tablets, PCs, games consoles, etc. responsibly?”

Therefore

Be a role model and don't constantly look at your phone. Put the device away sometimes.



10. Know the risk of addiction. Test yourself, seek help!

With online media, there is a risk of problematic use and even addiction. Parents should be aware of this and discuss it with their child: Many offers on the Internet are designed to entice us and not let us go. If you are unsure, a digital self-test can help you better assess your child's media use: Is the child already addicted? Or at risk of addiction? Or is everything OK? If necessary, parenting and addiction counseling centers, for example, can offer professional support.

Tip

Online addicts or young people at risk of addiction often initially resist conversations, advice or therapy. As parents, you should still seek help. The professionals often have very good ideas about what can be done. In the end, the child often comes to their senses.

These recommendations are supported by:



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“Many children would have developed social, musical or other skills without the time-consuming screen.”

Prof. Dr. med. David Martin

“Children and young people who are weakened or traumatized by the media are rarely able to express this. Parents often know little about these triggers.”

Dr. med. Silke Schwarz

“Parents need understanding and support so that the challenges of parenting in the digital age do not overwhelm them.”

Prof. Dr. Paula Bleckmann

“Use media consciously – and know how!”

Dr. med. Ulrike Gaiser

The full text of the guideline can be found at:

<https://register.awmf.org/de/leitlinien/detail/027-075>

