

Resetting boundaries:

**Some useful tips for limiting
the time your child spends on
electronics**

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With so much operating online, it can be really difficult to limit screen time. From classes to homework, to entertainment being conducted using a screen, it can be difficult to set appropriate limits and boundaries. Especially as schools re-open and we return to a slightly more regular routine. Establishing new boundaries or re-establishing previous boundaries is really important.

Don't spring a sudden withdrawal of or reduction in screen time on your child. Prepare them for the change gradually by following our tips:

1. Create "Technology-Free Zones"

This may be an area such as the kitchen or dining room where your child (and ideally the entire family) is not allowed to use electronic devices - from mobile phones to iPads and laptops, in this zone, they are not permitted. It is also good practice for everyone to remove phones and other devices from the bedroom as much as possible so as not to affect sleep.

2. Create "Technology-Free Times"

When so much of life is currently happening online, it can be really important to take time out, away from a screen, and be present with the people around you. In your family, it may be important to limit screen time before bedtime. Or, you may decide that your children will only have access to screens on the weekend or after homework has been completed.

3. Explain the reason behind limiting screen time

You may want to limit screen time in order to create more quality family time or, you may be choosing to limit screen time to encourage your children to partake in different hobbies or activities. You may want to limit exposure to blue light which can affect sleep, or you may want your child to have time to complete their homework or get to bed earlier on a school night. Whatever your reason, it is important to share with your child the "why" behind it all. Inviting your child to understand will help them to have ownership of these boundaries and should help in their adherence to new rules.

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4. Encourage alternative activities

Emphasise the importance of spending time outdoors, or socialising (when it is safe to do so). Having a schedule may be a useful way of helping your child to see how their time will be spent day-to-day. See our guidelines for developing a routine.

5. Be consistent

As useful as some of these tips may be, their benefit will only be realised with consistency. Creating this consistency will also help your child to get used to new limits and restrictions. Routine and boundaries are incredibly important for children and, in this, consistency is key.

6. Be patient

Be prepared for your child to take time to adjust to new rules. Carefully reiterate the new rules when screen time is requested outside of the new norm, don't just say "no". Maybe try to pre-empt requests by referring to this new routine at the start of the day, i.e., "remember today is going to be an iPad-free day so we are going to do something outside instead". By doing this, your child should find this adjustment much easier.

For more information and resources please check out our website www.autism-toolkit.ie