

November 1, 2023



St Patrick's Preschool

November News 2023

Screen Time, How Much is Too Much?

Screen time for young children is a hot topic these days. Parents are using screens more and more, and at an earlier age, to distract and entertain their little ones. While this is an effective tool there are some long term consequences.

One thing to keep in mind is that screen time increases as children age. If your two year old is in front of a screen for two hours a day, that's 14 hours a week! As kids become pre-teens they typically are given a phone so parents can keep track of them. Screen time increases on the phone, and then increases again in high school as more of their school work is done on a computer in addition to their phone and television time.

Why might too much screen time be a problem for kids?

The Vision Council states that 30 percent of parents report their children experience at least one of the following symptoms after being exposed to more than two hours of screen time per day:

- Headaches
- Neck/shoulder pain
- Eye strain, dry or irritated eyes
- Reduced attention span
- Poor behavior
- Irritability

Eye issues are one of the most obvious effects of screen time. The rapid rise of [myopia](#), or nearsightedness, worldwide has been linked to increased use of and exposure to electronic devices. Looking at a screen for long periods of time doesn't give developing eyes the opportunity to focus on real objects in the distance, at mid range and up close. Developing depth perception and tracking objects is also important for young eyes. Furthermore, too much exposure to blue light at the wrong time of day can disrupt the normal sleep/wake cycle, which can lead to serious health and developmental consequences.

In addition to compromising their vision, kids are not exercising, using their imagination, or reading when they are looking at a screen. Their brains are shifting into neutral and they are not actively problem solving or engaging in conversation.

So... Limiting screen time is obviously important. Experts recommend no more than two hours a day for infant to five year olds. This includes playing a movie in the car, looking at a phone while at a restaurant or in the shopping cart, and covers all screens: phone, tablet, tv, and computer.

So how do I keep my child busy without a screen? It's time to get creative!

Fun Without a Screen

1. While in the grocery store point out colors and shapes. Work together to hunt for similar items.
2. Have your child help to make the shopping list before you go to the store. Then have them help to find and cross off each item.
3. In the car point out letters in signs. Ask your child what letters they recognize.
4. Play music in the car, sing or move with the music.
5. At a restaurant ask for crayons and paper (or bring your own). Teach your child to play tic-tac-toe. Take turns adding onto each other's drawing.
6. At home implement a 'quiet time' each day. During this time everyone is in their own space reading a book or playing quietly by themselves. Start with a short time and add on as your child gets better at self-entertaining.
7. Have your child help cook dinner. Give them a safe knife and have them cut vegetables, or tear lettuce for a salad. They will try different foods if they have a hand in preparing them.
8. If you have company, or need time to talk to your spouse, set up a tea party with stuffed animals nearby so your child can play but still feel like they are included.

It's not easy, but if you put in the time and think creatively, you will find that your child is more verbal, independent, and their behavior in public places will improve. You might also find that you are not as focused on your own screen, and can enjoy being more in the moment with your child.

All About Diwali

Diwali, one of the most celebrated cultural and religious holidays in the world, is a five-day "festival of lights" that celebrates good over evil—or lightness over darkness. The holiday follows the lunar calendar and will be celebrated this year November 10th-14th. I know many of you know so much more than I, but this is what I found out about this beautiful celebration:

- Diwali celebrates the triumph of light over darkness at the beginning of a new year, it also represents the end of the harvest and bounty of the season. The official holiday likely arose from a combination of various harvest events.
- The central idea is: where there is light, there is no space for darkness. Therefore, light is critical during the festival, and **small clay lamps called diyas** are used to illuminate spaces and invite Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, into one's home and life.
- Each day embraces a different aspect to welcome the new year, refresh one's life, and reconnect with family:

Day 1 is a day of cleaning, decluttering, and otherwise cleansing to open room for light and prosperity in one's home, life, and soul.

Day 2 is dedicated to creating elaborate decorations.

Day 3 is the main day of the holiday is used for family gatherings and feasts, music, dancing, and more. Gifts are exchanged, prayers are offered, and fireworks displays are often planned for this day.

Day 4 is reserved for visiting others, particularly family members and friends this day also includes feasts and gift exchanges.

Day 5 is dedicated to the connection between siblings. Brothers and sisters will offer prayers on this day to protect and guide their siblings for a healthy and prosperous new year.

We plan to celebrate Diwali at school on November 14th. We would love to have our families who celebrate Diwali at home share some traditional Diwali treats with us. Kids will have an opportunity to try these treats for snack, and parents can join in sharing a treat and conversation at pickup.

Upcoming Events:

- November 1st - Teacher Work Day **NO SCHOOL**
- November 10th - Veteran's Day **NO SCHOOL**
- November 14th - Diwali Celebration
- November 22nd-24th - Thanksgiving Break
NO SCHOOL
- December 18th - Classroom Holiday Celebrations
- December 19th - Christmas Program in the sanctuary at 11:00am (No Lunch Bunch)
- December 20-January 3rd - Holiday Break
NO SCHOOL
- January 4th - Back to School 2024!

