

## Technology and children

There are plenty of good things to say about technology in the home. I mean we all like to snuggle up and watch the favourite TV show with our kids or maybe, you know, explore something on the Internet together, whether it's looking for your next holiday or helping kids with their homework, so it's not a bad thing. It's great to have all this technology in the home, but I think sometimes we overdo it.

This year, she's been asking for a mobile phone, an iPod, a touch-screen phone, an iPod, a new stereo and a laptop.

I've got a mobile phone, a laptop, an iPod, a DS and a telly in my room.

I've got a DS as well.

A PSP?

I haven't

A Playstation?

No.

A Wii?

No.

### Set limits

It seems like there's new technology in every room of the house, isn't there? And actually, it's your job as a parent to manage it for your children. They're going to push the boundaries and want lots of more access to technology than you're willing to give, so the first thing to do is to set a time limit. Be really clear about what they can and can't do every day. And, actually, children really shouldn't have any more than two hours a day of screen time and that includes all their games, maybe they're playing on a handheld console, their mobile, computer and television.

They're just looking at a screen all the time. They don't do anything; activity seems to have gone out of the window.

Another thing to think about: is the TV on as your constant background noise? Because, actually, turning the television off when you're not watching something, and particularly during mealtimes when you want to have a chat together - catch up on each other's day, is really important.

We use television almost as a reward. You know that if he has been, you know, very well behaved or he's done well at school, you know, then we're likely to let him have a little bit more television.

Technology has got its bonuses for parents too. I get really busy at home and it's such a relief sometimes when I can settle the children in front of the television for half an hour and I can make a couple of phone calls and perhaps get the tea on. And there's nothing wrong with using technology to, kind of, give yourself a little bit of help around the home and give yourself a break. It's just keeping it to moderation and not too much, and that's the key. And, of course, there are plenty of other things to do with your children as well as watch television with them and sometimes we've kind of let go of some of those traditional games we used to play, or even going out and messing about in the garden with them because there's too much TV. It robs us sometimes of family time, so maybe have a TV-free day or an evening when you do get out those old board games, or you go out to the park or you do something together as a family, which isn't watching the box.

### **Aim for no more than two hours of screen time a day**

#### **Why not have a TV-free day?**

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