



BUL 1132

Step Away from the Screen

LONG LIVE IDAHO BULLETIN SERIES

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Playtime, not screen time: Cut screen time to two hours or less a day.

Introduction

Exploring the world around and engaging in real-life activities are important for brain development and maintenance.

Television and other electronic media simply cannot provide the same type of brain stimulation. For many people, computers, tablets, and smart phones are part of daily life for work and school. However, too much screen time may lead to weight gain, obesity, attention problems, sleep problems, and lower academic achievement. This is why doctors recommend 2 hours or less of recreational TV and screen time a day. Try these tips to step away from the screen.



Power down to power up.

Turn off TVs and handheld devices. Replace one hour of screen time with one hour of physical activity.



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Try something new.

Pick a new activity that your family or friends can do once a week instead of watching TV or playing video games. Take a trip to the library, community pool, park, or farmers market. Try a new board or card game.



Tune into dinner, not electronics.

Keep the TV, cell phones, and other electronic devices off during mealtimes. Instead of focusing on media content, focus on eating together with family or friends. Be present and give your full attention to those at the table with you.



No screens in the bedroom.

Keep TVs, computers, and electronics out of the bedroom. Electronic devices cause mental stimulation, making it difficult to achieve restful sleep. The blue light generated by them may also reduce melatonin production, a hormone the body produces in response to darkness. Read a book instead of adding more screen time.



Schedule time for screens.

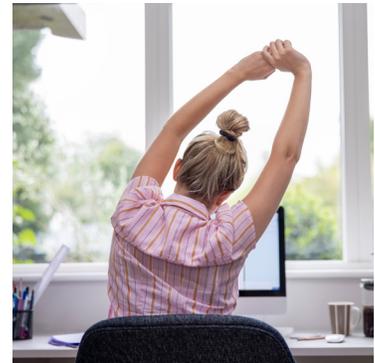
Make a contract for yourself or engage family members or roommates in creating a household contract. Discuss ways to reduce nonschool or work-related screen time. Develop a way to track your achievements and identify a reward, such as trying a new family card game, taking a walk in a new park, earning a break from a chore, or some other enjoyable nonscreen activity.

Turn off the TV or other electronic devices and turn on simple activities to replace screen time, such as a short walk or dinner with family and friends.

Simple How-To

Because screens are a part of daily life for many people, changing habits and reducing screen time might seem challenging. The following simple swaps will help you to step away throughout the day.

	Instead of This...	Choose This
At Breakfast	Watching TV or scrolling through social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your family about what you are eating. • Enjoy the morning's calm, by focusing on your food and enjoying your meal.
At Work or School	Sitting in front of your computer all day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take active breaks every hour. • Stand up, stretch, and walk around the building.
After School (Kids)	Spending time on a tablet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw, read a book, play with Play-Doh, or build a blanket fort. • Play outside. • Make a chore list and help out at home.
At Dinner	Eating in front of a screen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get everyone involved in preparing the meal. • Talk about your day. • Check out https://thefamilydinnerproject.org/ for ideas about fun games or conversation starters.
After Dinner	Crashing on the couch for the night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a walk around the neighborhood. • Work on a scrapbook or household project. • Play a board game or charades. • Read a book or draw.
At Bedtime	Falling asleep to a show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try different methods of relaxation, such as mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing. • Set a sleep routine, so your body knows it is time for rest.



Further Reading

For more tips and ideas, check out Eat Smart Idaho:
In the Kitchen <https://eatsmartidahointhekitchen.com>.



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