LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

What do young children need?

Nurturing relationships, positive interactions, and responsive communication with adults and other children

Human relationships are central to early learning. Building trust, responsiveness, attachment, and communication, is the primary work of parents/caregivers and young children–in the home and in the classroom.[7]

Open-ended play with materials, people, ideas, and the natural world

Children learn through active, self-directed play. They need opportunities for all kinds of play—solo play, social play, sensory play, art play, construction play, pretend play, play in nature, play that uses large and fine motor skills, and play with sounds, songs, and language.[2, 6, 11]

Opportunities to begin, practice, and repeat new skills and thinking

Young children thrive in environments that encourage hands-on learning, support their interests and ideas, and create plenty of opportunities for physical, intellectual, social, and emotional exploration.

Children build confidence and learn to manage themselves and their emotions as they try new things, experience struggle or failure, problem solve, and seek new challenges.[2]

Can screens meet a child's needs?

There is no evidence that screen-based experiences provide the many benefits of real-world social interactions and caregiving.[7]

Time on screens takes children away from multidimensional play, discovery, and creativity.

Screen use can interrupt the learning process and limit the development of motivation, confidence, and resilience—key ingredients for life-long wellbeing.[6, 8, 10]

Scan or **click** for full Screen Aware Kit!

Scan or **click** for research references and recommended reading!

An Early Childhood Work Group Project
LEAD AUTHORS: Mindy Holohan, MA, CFLE and Patricia Cantor, EdD

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LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Technology has changed, but children's developmental needs have not! Support healthy development by aiming to do activities from each developmental bucket every day!

## Physical Development

Gross motor (big movement and exercise)

Walking · Running · Crawling · Jumping · Swinging · Balancing · Climbing · Hopscotch · Somersaults · Throwing and catching · Kicking, rolling, and catching balls

Fine motor (best developed using three dimensional objects)

Puzzles · Drawing · Painting · Writing · Playdough · Building · Cutting and tearing

Cognitive/Brain Development

Matching, sorting, and counting objects by shape, color, size, etc

Opposites: emotions (sad/happy), directions (over/under), sizes (little/big)

Taking things apart · Putting things together · Imaginary play
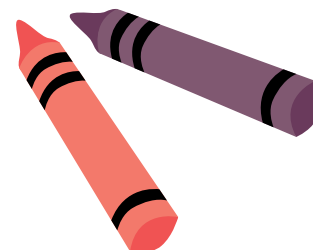
Language Development

Naming and describing things in the environment · Playing "Show and Tell"

Asking and answering questions · Rhyming and word play · Reading books

Following directions (Parent to child, and child to parent)

Social-Emotional Development

Exploring people's faces and expressions · Naming and expressing emotions

Observing and identifying others' emotions · Showing affection (hugs, cuddling, kisses)

Separating from and reuniting with parent/caretaker · Taking care of a pet

Sharing · Taking turns · Playing with others

Life Skills

Helping with simple chores · Self-directed activity & independent play

Using the toilet · Eating · Bathing · Getting dressed

What activities would you add?

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IMPACTS

Screen awareness helps prioritize the developmental needs and wellbeing of young children amid many confusing and misleading messages about screen-based technologies.

What's wrong with screens?

Screen technologies can be effective tools for communication, organization, and learning for older children, teens, and adults but there is little evidence that screen use has benefits for babies, toddlers, and young children.[1,2]

Many apps and other screen-based programs are designed to capture and hold children's attention, which can result in overuse, behavior challenges, and exposure to harmful advertising.[11]

Why be screen aware?

Children's development

Research shows that the brains of infants and toddlers are not wired to learn from two-dimensional screens and that heavy exposure to screen media disrupts physical, social, and language development. Early tech use is associated with executive function challenges (the capacity to initiate and complete tasks). While some evidence indicates that preschoolers may learn from well-designed, developmentally-appropriate screen media, most apps and programs categorized as "educational" have no evidence to support that claim. They also take time away from real-world experiences proven to be educational for young children.[4,6,7,8]

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IMPACTS

Children's relationships

Screen use–by both children and adults–can interfere with the development of attachment between kids and their caregivers. Screens can distract adults, draw their attention away from children, and reduce the quality and amount of engagement and responsiveness that are the earliest foundations for attachment, trust, and self-regulation. Beginning in infancy, talking to children and responding to their vocalizations, (called serve-and-return interactions), are essential for children's brain development, as well as their acquisition of speech and language.[2,12,16]

Children's desires, behaviors, and habits

The creation of digital content that manipulates human behaviors, neurological (brain) functioning, and beliefs is referred to as "persuasive design."

Apps and programming that use persuasive design to manipulate children's attention, attitudes, and desires threaten healthy development. They also undermine children's ability to entertain themselves by promoting dependency on external entertainment and stimulation. (Many creative ideas grow out of boredom!)

Researchers, educators, mental health professionals, and many in the technology sector are raising alarms about technologies that exploit children's developing brains for profit and that reinforce neural pathways associated with addiction.[6,11]

Children's eyesight, speech, sleep, and physical activity

Children are spending more and more time with screen media–at home, in care settings, and in classrooms. All that time adds up fast and takes away from activities that promote healthy development such as movement, play, exploration, and social interactions.

More time on screens (and less time outdoors) has been linked to greater risk for nearsightedness and other eye ailments. The blue light emitted from screens interferes with children's sleep, which contributes to behavioral problems, anxiety issues, academic struggles, and a wide range of health issues. Early smartphone and tablet use is associated with speech delays. Children who spend more time with screens are more likely to be sedentary and are at heightened risk for obesity.[2,6,7,8,13,14,15,17,18]

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RELATIONSHIPS & TECHNOFERENCE

Trust, responsiveness, and communication form the foundation of human relationships. Researchers use the term **"technoference"** to describe how technology can get in the way of crucial interpersonal relations and engagement.

Evidence suggests that screen use presents serious challenges for adults as well as kids.

According to research[8] from Zero to Three:

Parent technology use gets in the way of talking and connecting with kids.

Heavy technology use by parents is associated with lower-quality parent-child interactions.

Parent technology use means that kids act out more to try and get our attention.

Heavy technology use by parents is also associated with more reports of challenging child behavior

Parent technology use interrupts our time with children.

Half of surveyed parents say that technology interrupts parent-child interactions at least three times a day. 50% of surveyed children agreed that their parents check their phones too much, and 36% say their parents get distracted by their phones during conversations.

Technology use can make it harder to parent as a team.

More technology use by parents is associated with less cooperation between them on child-rearing issues.

Screen awareness supports adult-child connections!
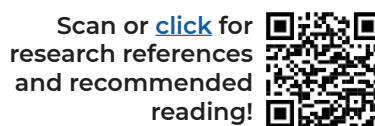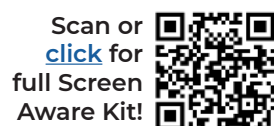
Technoference disrupts important interactions between adults and children and can cause children to feel confused, frustrated, sad, and resentful. It can also interrupt important bonding and attachment experiences, leading children to feel a lack of safety and security.[3,5,6,7]

Check out the back of this page for tips on reducing technoference and enhancing adult-child relationships!

Scan or **click** for full Screen Aware Kit!

Scan or **click** for research references and recommended reading!

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RELATIONSHIPS & TECHNOFERENCE

Key practices for reducing technoference and strengthening connections

1. **Make screen-free parent/child time every day.** Small doses of attention make big impacts!
2. **Put devices away when not actively using them.** Reduce unnecessary distractions/interruptions.
3. **Be a media role model.** Children learn best from watching adults balance screen time.

Relationship-boosting activities

Reading a book, playing games (peek-a-boo, chase, etc) or doing puzzles with your child.
Tip: Use this opportunity to mix up positions: on your lap, cuddled up next to you, or on bellies face-to-face.

Singing together and using hand motions.
Tip: Fun song choices include "Twinkle, Twinkle", "Itsy Bitsy Spider", "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes", and "Wheels on the Bus"
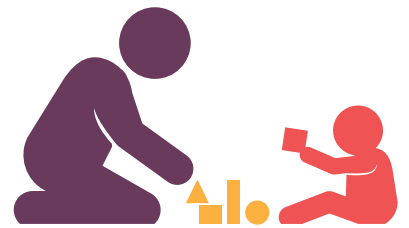
Taking a walk.
Tip: Make it a treasure hunt and ask them to look for beautiful things. Or count things – like red cars, birds, different kinds of flowers, etc.

Sitting together when eating meals.
Tip: Letting your child feed you and feeding your child can make meals more interactive and fun!

Teaming up on chores.
Tip: Doing chores together (cleaning, cooking, petcare, raking leaves, etc.) creates bonding opportunities, gives children a sense of accomplishment, and gets them in the habit of helping.

Relationship-boosting habits

Getting down to their level. Kneel down or raise them up so you are face-to-face.

Picking them up when you can. Young children are held far less than they used to be because of the strollers, bouncers, car seats/carriers, etc. Children learn to self-soothe with support from adults. They need a loving parent/caregiver to develop this ability.

Keeping routines. Let them know ahead of time if there will be any changes. This helps young children know what to expect and rely on you.

Narrating what you're doing on your screen and sharing when you'll be done. This helps children learn that technology is a tool used for specific purposes and that they are not being ignored. For example, "I have to respond to this text and then we'll get a snack."

Putting down your screens when children are present. Screen-based distractions can cause you to miss your child's cues and bids for interaction. For children to feel connected and safe, they need to see your face and recognize that you are responding to them.

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ADVERTISING & MEDIA LITERACY

Managing the impacts of advertising on children is a challenge. Stealth marketing is everywhere!

Did you know?

- 💲 Young children cannot distinguish between advertising and app/program content. This distinction is even more difficult when advertising is disguised as content, a common practice in children's entertainment.[1,4]

- 💲 Advertisers work to expose children to brands as early as possible, encouraging them to influence adults' purchasing decisions through nagging and attachment to branded characters.[6,11]

- 💲 Researchers have found that children as young as two can recognize brands. (Marketers are aware of this as well!)[6,10]

- 💲 The more advertising that children see, the more likely they are to demonstrate materialistic values.[5,11]

- 💲 The business model of for-profit media leads many platforms to engage in manipulative and unfair practices. For example, YouTube's algorithm is designed with autoplay to keep kids watching video after video in order to serve more ads.

- 💲 Many "free" apps for young children exploit developmental vulnerabilities to make a profit by allowing children to play a very small portion of a game and requiring in-app purchases to access additional content, characters, or experiences.[4]

- 💲 Consumerism is associated with increases in anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem and can have negative effects on children's physical, social, emotional, and academic health.[1,11]

- 💲 Companies apply strategies such as emotional and social manipulation to ads targeting kids. As young children work to understand and make meaning in the world, they are especially vulnerable to these deceptive techniques.[1]

Explore more research on the impacts of commercialism on child development at fairplayforkids.org/beyond-brands/

Scan or **click** for full Screen Aware Kit!

Scan or **click** for research references and recommended reading!

Children need guidance to grow up healthy among countless advertising messages, images, and strategies.

Adults can help by...

Setting limits on children's screen time.

Choosing content that is age appropriate and free of commercial messages.

Teaching media literacy skills that help children make sense of the motives behind screen-based content.

Supporting initiatives for public policy solutions and corporate accountability.

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ADVERTISING & MEDIA LITERACY

Modeling skepticism of advertisements and influencers

Children don't often see or hear how we think about pop-up ads, paid influencers, and other commercials. Identifying and discussing advertisements helps your child develop an understanding of how companies try to affect their behavior.

For example, if you see an ad for fast food, you might point out that the pictures look much different than if you buy it in real life. It looks yummier, bigger, fresher, etc in the ad. This is intentional because they want you to buy it. Saying it out loud helps children grasp these concepts.[3,7,8,9]

Key questions to ask your child when they see an ad or influencer

- $ What is this ad or influencer trying to get me to do?

- $ How does this advertisement make me feel?

- $ Do you remember the last <toy, game, etc> we bought after seeing it on an ad? Where is it now? How often do you play with it?

TIP: If your child insists they want what is being sold, you can ask "Shall we put this item on your wish list?" Often just putting an item on a list will help your child move on. They will often forget or be less excited by the time you get back to it.

Key questions to ask yourself before allowing a show or app

1 Why am I having my child watch or play on a screen?

2 Who are the role models and what values do they teach?

3 Is this trying to sell something to my child or train my child to nag me to buy something?

4 How does my child behave after watching this show or playing this app? Do I see scenes or scripts from the show or game reenacted in their play?

5 If it claims to be educational, how does it back up the claim? Is it supported by a trusted educator or educational organization?

6 Does this app contain in-app purchases, frequent ads, or pop-ups? Many apps marketed as "free" encourage or even require children to make in-app purchases or are full of ads. An ad-free app that costs a few dollars is often cheaper in the long run than "free" ones.

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OUTDOOR TIME AND NATURE

Research shows that time outdoors and exposure to the natural world have major benefits for child development!

Screen awareness isn't just about what happens on screens. It also means staying alert to how time on screens can displace other activities and interests. Nature time is multi-sensory, self-directed, non-commercial, holistic, and proven to enhance health and wellbeing for individuals of all ages.

Cognitive (Brain) Benefits[4,5,6,7]
- Boosts academic performance
- Improves focus and attention
- Enhances creativity and imagination
- Improves problem solving skills

Social and Emotional Benefits[1,2,4,5,6,7]
- Increases empathy
- Reduces stress levels
- Improves mood
- Reduces aggression
- Increases impulse control

Physical Benefits[2,3,5,8]
- Increases activity and fitness levels
- Reduces nearsightedness
- Increases vitamin D levels
- Improves sleep

Outdoor experiences provide...

※ **Helpful breaks from screen environments and habits.**

※ **Remedies for some of the negative effects of screen exposure.**

※ **High-quality and accessible activities that do not involve or depend on screens.**

※ **Multi-sensory, non-commercial, and self-directed opportunities for play.**

Scan or [click] for full Screen Aware Kit!

Scan or [click] for research references and recommended reading!

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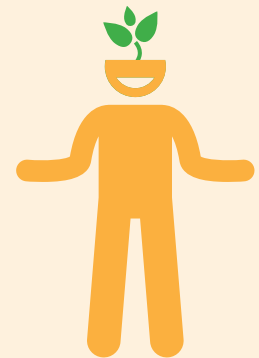
OUTDOOR TIME AND NATURE

One of the best antidotes to screen time is green time!

There are endless activities to do outside, whether deep in the forest or on a city sidewalk!

Explore nature and use your senses

Find different types of trees, flowers, or leaves   Collect and compare seeds

Collect flowers for pressing   Go on a bug hunt

Listen to nature sounds & name them   Smell flowers, leaves, bark, and dirt

Compare textures of leaves, grass, bark, flowers, etc.

Collect different shades of green and brown

Look for plants growing in surprising places (like in the cracks of the sidewalk)

Bring inside activities outside

Create with play dough   Do a puzzle   Play a game   Read a book

Draw, sketch, or paint   Sing songs   Daydream   Have a picnic

Share stories   Host a play time   Plan a visit   Take a nap

Get physical

Play tag or hide and seek   Balance on a log   Go on a hike

Run through a sprinkler   Build a fort   Ride a bike or scooter

Roll down a hill   Climb a tree   Jump rope   Swim   Throw and catch

Set up a race or obstacle course   Stretch or do yoga   Swing

Book recommendations

1000 Hours Outside: Activities to Match Green Time with Screen Time by Ginny Yurich

The Big Book of Nature Activities by Jacob Rodenburg

Nature Play Workshop for Families: A Guide to 40+ Outdoor Learning Experiences for All Seasons by Monica Wiedel-Lubinski

Additional resources

Connect with a local nature center

Connect with your state's parks and recreation department

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IN THE HOME

Screen awareness begins at home...

Set yours up for success!

Location

Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are drawn to what is directly around them and less attracted to screen technologies when they are out of sight. Similar to managing sweets and treats, removing or covering devices reduces their appeal.

Guidance

Young children are not developmentally ready to understand or manage screen technology. Adult modeling and guidance directly impacts how children understand and use screens.[1,2]

Engagement

Research shows that outcomes for young children–including the ability to regulate themselves and the quality and quantity of their sleep–improve when screen activity and exposure are limited. When tech is used, it is important that content is appropriate for their age and supported by adult guidance and engagement.[1,2,7]

Top Tips

Create screen-free zones and screen-free times. Top priorities: sleeping areas, bedtimes, mealtimes, and family time.[2,5]

Establish boundaries for screen technology use among all members of the household.[5]
• Why is it used?
• When can it be used?
• How can it be used?

Avoid using screens for reward, distraction, or punishment.[1]

Encourage children to think about the creation and content of screen-based media.[3]
• Who made this?
• Why was it made?
• How was it made?
• Who was it made for?

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IN THE HOME

Maintain screen-free times and places

- Keep meal times screen-free.
- Keep screens out of bedrooms and bedtime routines.
- Have a designated common area for screens. Ex: living room.
- Put away or cover tv/tablet/computer when they are not being used. Out of sight, out of mind!

Prioritize quality screen experiences

- Use a TV vs tablet/smartphone since it:
  - Stays in one place.
  - Makes it harder to flip between content.
  - Encourages compromise on viewing decisions.
  - Creates shared family culture.
- Pick slower moving shows.
- Use "guided access" mode on devices to limit children's use to a single app.

Create screen-free alternatives

- Arrange areas for hands-on play and exploration.
- Ideas for healthy indoor play include boxes, playdough, dolls, blocks, water play, puzzles, crayons/markers and paper, child-safe scissors and glue, books, books, and more books!
- Use whatever is around for toys — pots/pans, towels, empty toilet paper rolls, etc. This teaches children to be resourceful, creative, and less materialistic.
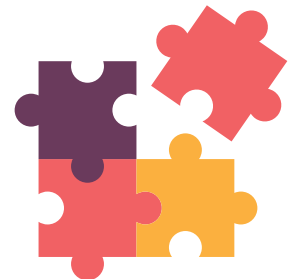
Practice a screen-aware mindset

- View shows alongside your children so you are familiar with the content and confident it is age appropriate. Children learn best when they have the opportunity to discuss, question, and process what they see on screens.
- Limit the pressure to always entertain your child. It is important for them to learn to soothe and entertain themselves without screens.
- Show, don't tell. Young children learn best through adult modeling. Silence your phone when possible to show your child family relationships are more important than screens.

Build screen-awareness with children's books

When You Give a Mouse an iPhone by Ann Droyd
The Glowing Rectangle by Katie Friedman
Cami and Wyatt Have Too Much Screen Time by Stacy Bauer
Me, Myselfie and I by Jamie Lee Curtis
You're Missing It by Brady Smith

IN THE CLASSROOM

The presence of screen technologies within many classrooms and care settings—in combination with children's screen exposure outside of them—makes screen awareness an increasingly important consideration for early childhood practitioners and programs.

Key practices for early childhood settings

Maintain responsible use of classroom and personal technology[8]

- ☑ Set clear boundaries for use of screen-based devices in the environment.
- ☑ Establish policies that respect the personal privacy rights of all stakeholders (e.g., children, families, staff).
- ☑ Select screen media, apps, and activities that are free of any commercial messaging or advertising.
- ☑ Limit the use of screens for outsourcing tasks and activities related to teaching and learning (e.g., group times, transitions, celebrations).

Make developmentally-informed screen choices and policies[2,8]

- ☑ Prioritize hands-on experiences and in-person relationships.
- ☑ Apply knowledge of whole child development, and the needs of individual children, to determine whether screen use is beneficial and appropriate.
- ☑ Consider the cumulative time– both within and outside of the learning environment– that children are spending on screen-based devices.
- ☑ Avoid use of screens for behavioral motivation, rewards, or distractions.

Guide children as they learn to understand and navigate screen-based technologies[3]

- ☑ Communicate and model intention, purpose, and boundaries when using screen-based devices and media in the environment: Why it is used · When it is used · How it is used
- ☑ Encourage children to think critically about the creation and content of screen-based media: Who made it? · Why was it made? · How was it made? · Who was it made for?
- ☑ Maintain active adult engagement when implementing screen-based activities.

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IN THE CLASSROOM

Tips for classroom and care settings

- ☑ Put up signs for screen-free spaces or zones.

- ☑ Have paper and pens available for adults to jot things down while in the presence of children rather than use phones.

- ☑ Store or cover screen technologies when they are not being used for essential or required tasks.

- ☑ Turn off distracting sounds and notifications.

- ☑ Narrate your device use. Let children know what you're doing on your screen and that you'll be with them after you're done. This helps children make sense of an adult's divided attention without feeling ignored.

- ☑ Resist the urge to use screen-based music or shows during lunch or snack times.

- ☑ Use audio-only when possible. For example, when you want to play a song, turn the iPad around or cover the TV so the children don't see the screen.

- ☑ Minimize time spent taking pictures of children to send to families.

Questions for early childhood practitioners

Is a screen required for this activity?

Which is more active, the technology or the child?

Does screen use achieve an outcome that would not be possible without it?

How could this task or activity be done with 3D objects or materials?

Could this make children more dependent on screens?

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DIGITAL PRIVACY AT HOME

When everything from toys to baby monitors can be connected to the internet, it can be challenging to maintain children's privacy.

Privacy priorities for the home

Voice-Assisted Speakers

When smart speakers are on, they are listening! While providing on-demand content, smart speakers often record everything from children's play, to their tantrums, to sensitive conversations between parents about their child. It is also helpful to maximize privacy settings (like allowing the device to listen only when you press a button) or to consider changing to a smart speaker without recording capacity.[1]

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet Connected Toys

Playthings that feature new technologies often appear novel and fun. Unfortunately, many of these products are not regulated for child safety or privacy creating new avenues for profiting and collecting data off of children such as tracking their location, listening to their conversations and play, and promoting brand or character-centered relationships. A number of toys (such as Mattel's Hello Barbie) have been discontinued due to privacy and security violations. Until privacy regulations are established, parents and caregivers are left with the burden of researching and monitoring the security and safety of AI and internet connected playthings causing many to choose to opt out of them all together.[1]

Apps and Online Games

To help keep children safe, apps and games should have strong, easy-to-read privacy statements and be specifically designed for their developmental age. Apps and online games should not allow children to share personal information, interact with strangers, or include pop-up ads, images, or videos that encourage or allow them to click to other content.[1]

Social Media and YouTube

Privacy experts advise to "share with care." Every parent has the right to choose whether images of, or details about, their child are posted by others including friends, family, caregivers, and teachers! Researchers have found that children often resent their parents posting pictures of them on social media without their permission. Once posted, it is not possible to control what happens to images and videos that are online.[3,4]

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Scan or click for research references and recommended reading!

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DIGITAL PRIVACY AT HOME

A few simple habits like talking through your own privacy decisions and reading picture books can go a long way in developing digital privacy awareness!

Modeling strong digital privacy practices

Young children learn best through adult modeling. Sharing your thinking and privacy practices out loud teaches children how to protect their privacy more effectively than just telling them to do so. For example:

- ☑ When receiving a request for personal information, you can say "I just got an email from a stranger asking me where I live. I don't give out my private information to strangers!"

- ☑ When downloading an app (especially if it's for your child), talk through how you determine it is safe and what permissions (location, push notifications, etc.) you do/don't allow and why. If you decide not to download it, explain why.

Managing connected toys and voice assistants

Internet connected toys and voice assistants come with privacy concerns and the potential for children to form unhealthy relationships with electronic devices. If you choose to use these technologies, minimize risks by:

- ☑ Finding and using parental controls.
- ☑ Disabling "always on" options and limiting data sharing.
- ☑ Setting and communicating limits for where and how they can be used.
- ☑ Keeping them out of bedrooms and putting them away when not in use.

Questions to ask before sharing pictures of young children

1. Why am I posting it?
2. Is this open to the public or only viewable by friends and family I trust?
3. Does this platform or app collect data related to my child?
4. Is there a geolocation tag (location sharing) on my photo that could allow others to know where my child is? Is there other sensitive information displayed in this photo?
5. Could my child be embarrassed or upset about it now or later in life?

Resource and book recommendations

- ☑ *Buzzy's Adventure in Online Privacy* by Bilal Soylu
- ☑ *The Internet Sleuths* by A. M. Marcus
- ☑ *Safe, Secure and Smart App* *Checklist* & *Privacy Guide* by Fairplay

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CLASSROOM PRIVACY FOR FAMILIES

Early childhood programs that use digital devices have an obligation to protect the personal information of children and families. Look for key privacy practices* and policies:

Integrity

☑ Selling of personal student data and/or use for commercial or marketing purposes is prohibited.

☑ Advertising is not allowed on instructional software, apps, or websites used by children.

Security

☑ Encryption is used for sensitive child, family, and employee data.

☑ Security training and support is regularly provided for all individuals with access to personal information.

Consent

☑ Clear policies, practices, and permissions are in place for the use and management of photos and videos of children and families.

☑ Parental consent is required for disclosure of personal data, especially for highly sensitive information such as a child's disabilities, health, and/or disciplinary information.

Transparency

☑ Parents are notified of any disclosure of personal student or family information to any persons, companies, or organizations outside of the program and have clear avenues for opting out.

☑ Any disclosure of child or family data to a third party includes clear privacy policies that state the data to be disclosed, the purpose of the disclosure, and a date for when the data will be destroyed.

Accountability

☑ Privacy practices uphold program, state, and national laws and policies including those required by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Inspired by "5 Principles to Protect Student Privacy" by the Parent Coalition for Student Privacy

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Scan or click for research references and recommended reading!

60% of school apps sell student data; the majority of these sell to 10+ third parties.[1]

EdTech is on track to be a $207.3 billion business by 2026.[5]

Public schools are more likely to share/sell student data than private schools.[1]

Make sure your rights are being protected!

An Early Childhood Work Group Project
LEAD AUTHORS: Mindy Holohan, MA, CFLE and Lisa Cline

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CLASSROOM PRIVACY FOR FAMILIES

Questions families can ask

1 Do you use digital devices, online programs or apps in the classroom? If so, which ones?

2 How much time do children spend on screens every day? Doing what?

3 Do you have screen-free zones?

4 How do you handle photos, videos, and audio recordings of the kids?

5 Do you offer opt-out or off-line alternatives that use book/paper/pencil?

6 Do you have a privacy policy for the use of digital devices?

7 May I see the data/privacy terms and conditions for each of the online programs/apps you use? Do they receive a passing grade from the State of Kids Privacy report?

8 Can I see the data/meta-data collected on my child? If denied, see action #2.

Actions families can take

1 Request that your child not bring home any school-issued devices.

2 Submit a Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA)* request to see what data has been collected on your child.

3 Submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)* request for contracts, data privacy agreements, data dictionaries, and memoranda of understanding your school has with EdTech companies. See resources below on how to file a FOIA.

4 Share this sheet with teachers, administrators and other parents.

5 Find other parents who share this concern; this greatly increases the chances administrators will take your concerns seriously. One strategy is to organize an event with a few local experts. After the event, you may be able to collect emails and form a group of parents, who can approach your school's administration together.

Resources for families

Student Data Privacy Project's FERPA Letter Template + Instructions
Freedom of Information Act's website How to File a FOIA Request
Parent Coalition for Student Privacy's Parent Toolkit for Student Privacy
U.S. Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office

For children in elementary school or state-funded programs.

CLASSROOM PRIVACY FOR PROFESSIONALS

Protecting the privacy rights of children, families, and staff requires vigilance!

Digital privacy priorities for early childhood professionals

Cameras

Cameras can be helpful classroom tools. Use can also increase privacy risks and complications in early childhood settings.[3,6]

- The use of streaming webcams or closed circuit televisions in classroom and care settings can raise levels of mistrust, decrease morale, and increase misunderstandings and tensions.
- The use of personal devices in classroom settings to record children or manage recordkeeping can violate child privacy standards and laws.
- Documentation can impede on the interactions and activities of young children, violate a child's sense of autonomy, or promote performative or extrinsic motivation.

Social Media

The use of social media for classroom communications or program promotion can create unintended consequences.[1,5]

- Educators who use personal social media to engage with families can struggle with maintaining professional boundaries and protecting personal privacy.
- Families may feel forced to create accounts to gain access to important program or classroom updates and information.
- When a program or practitioner uses social media, the choice can be interpreted as an endorsement of the social network or platform.

EdTech

While there is often no upfront expense for use of educational technology (EdTech), there can be costs, including significant privacy violations.[1,2,5]

- EdTech promotes the use of online games, apps, and platforms (such as ABCMouse and IXL) as replacements for hands-on and person-to-person teaching and learning.
- The EdTech business model is designed to collect and sell children's personal identifiable information (PII) to profiteers. PII can include name, location, date of birth, SSN, keyword searches, browser history, videos and audio recordings, and more.
- Early childhood programs have a legal responsibility to get parental permission before using any EdTech app or website that collects information from children.

Scan or click for full Screen Aware Kit!

Scan or click for research references and recommended reading!

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CLASSROOM PRIVACY FOR PROFESSIONALS

Best practices for managing photos and videos

Limit documentation of children. While families enjoy seeing what their children are doing during the day, constant documentation is confusing and distracting for young children.

Consider the risks of live video streaming. While providing real-time access to families can seem beneficial, it also increases privacy risks and violations including hacking and misuse. It can lower morale for educators that feel under constant surveillance and increase conflict and misunderstanding. It can also alter children's behavior and play.

Create, communicate, and maintain policies for taking and sharing pictures and videos. Clear policies related to digital photos and videos are privacy essentials! Who can take them? What device(s) can be used? How much can they be used? How can they be shared? How are parental permissions secured and honored?

Best practices* for managing apps and online tools

Consider whether use is necessary. Many privacy issues can be avoided by simply not adopting online programs and applications.

Avoid using until vetted and approved by your program. Check to see if the app has received a passing grade in Common Sense Media's State of Children's Privacy Report and get detailed evaluation data on hundreds of commonly used products via their Privacy Direct service.

Provide notification and secure parental consent. Disclosure of personal student information to any persons, companies, or organizations outside of the school/program requires parental notification and consent.

Prepare alternative (e.g., hands-on) activities. Children whose parents choose to opt out of an online program deserve high quality alternatives.

Educate yourself on the principles of good digital citizenship and responsible technology practices. See resource recommendations below!

Resources for educators

Educator Toolkit for Teacher and Student Privacy by Parent Coalition for Student Privacy
U.S. Department of Education Student Privacy Policy Office

Based on Parent Coalition for Student Privacy recommendations.

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