



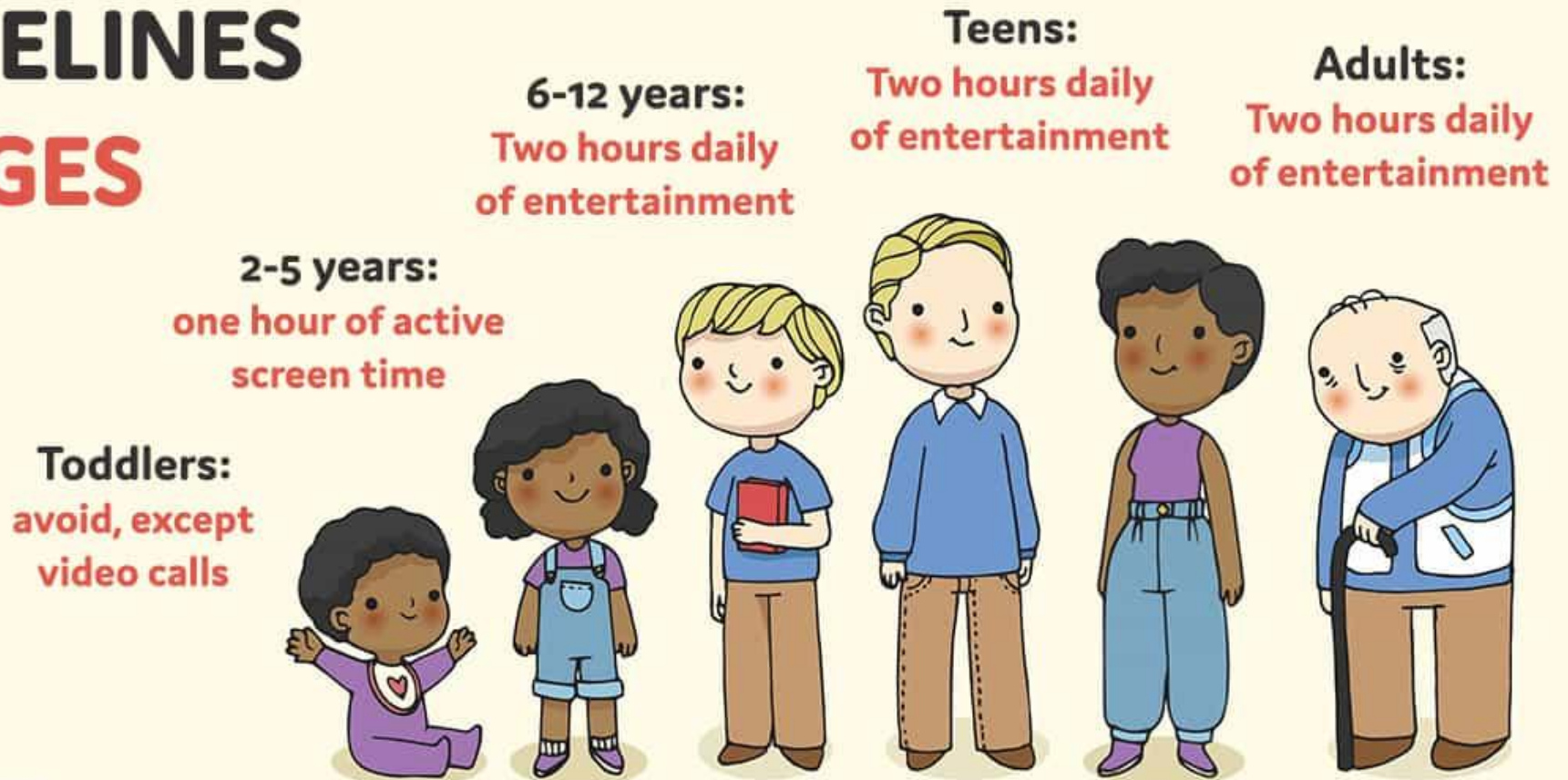
Christchurch Kindergarten

The parent's guide to healthy screen time

Supporting children aged 0-5 years old

Created by Christchurch Kindergarten June 2026

SCREEN TIME GUIDELINES BY AGES



gamequitters.com

Screen Time: A Guide for Parents

Screens are a part of everyday life, but in the early years children learn best through play, conversation, movement and time with caring adults. This guide offers simple advice for families on why limiting screen time matters, how much is recommended for young children, and practical ideas to help reduce screen use at home.

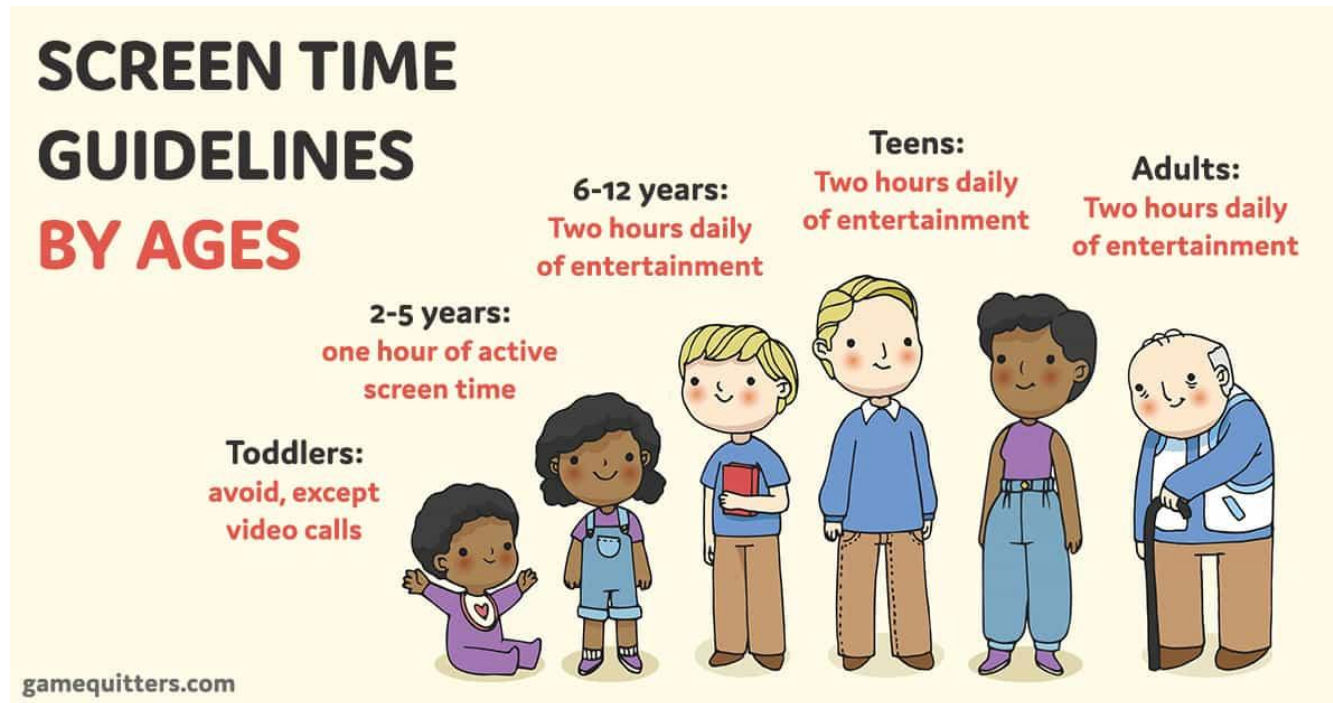
Why too much screen time is not recommended

- Young children learn best through real-life interaction. Talking, singing, reading and playing with adults help to build language, communication and social skills.
- Too much screen time can replace activities that are important for healthy development, such as physical play, creative play, sleep and family time.
- Fast-paced or highly stimulating content may make it harder for some children to concentrate and settle.
- Using screens before bedtime can affect sleep, and good sleep is essential for learning, behaviour and wellbeing.
- When children spend long periods on screens alone, they may miss valuable opportunities to explore, move, imagine and connect with others.



How much screen time is recommended?

- **Under 2 years:** Avoid screen time where possible, other than shared activities such as video calling with family.
- **2 to 5 years:** Try to keep screen time to no more than 1 hour a day, and less if possible.
- Keep screens away from mealtimes and avoid them in the hour before bed.
- Choose slow-paced, age-appropriate content and, whenever possible, watch together so you can talk about what your child is seeing.



Signs your child may need a screen- time reset

- Difficulty stopping screen time
- Reduced interest in hobbies
- Sleep problems
- Irritable when screens are reduced
- Less physical activity participation
- Socially withdrawn
- Constant request for devices
- Difficulty concentrating
- Speech and communication concerns
- Difficulty entertaining themselves



Screen time reflection

- ☐ Does my child sleep well?
- ☐ Does my child enjoy playing without screens?
- ☐ Does my child spend time outdoors every day?
- ☐ Do we enjoy screen-free family time together?
- ☐ Is screen use causing arguments at home?

If you answered "No" to several of these questions, it may be worth reviewing your family's screen habits



Why children find screens so hard to put down

- Instant responses when they tap, swipe or press buttons.
- Bright visuals and flashing images.
- Emotional comfort, where screens may become associated with calming down, waiting, travelling or winding down after a busy day.
- Children enjoy having control over what they watch and choose.
- Repetition of songs, videos and programmes they enjoy watching.
- Favourite characters feel familiar and comforting.
- Curiosity and exploration, as screens provide endless opportunities to discover new things.
- Screens require little effort compared to imaginative play.
- Many apps and videos are designed to keep children engaged.
- Achievement rewards & systems in games.
- Online social connection.

Understanding some of the reasons why helps parents approach the issue with empathy rather than frustration.



Tips for reducing screen time

- Create simple routines so your child knows when screens are and are not used.
- Have screen-free times each day, such as during meals, in the car or before bedtime.
- Keep bedrooms screen-free to support better sleep.
- Give advance warnings such as “One more episode” or “15 minutes left”.
- Turn off background television when nobody is actively watching.
- Offer access to screens rather than giving young children their own device.
- Use parental controls and check that content is suitable for your child’s age.
- Watch with your child and talk about what is happening on the screen.
- Model healthy habits by putting your own phone away during play and family time.



Ideas for screen-free activities

- Read books together and talk about the pictures.
- Sing nursery rhymes and action songs.
- Go for a walk and look for colours, shapes or animals.
- Build with blocks, Duplo or cardboard boxes.
- Draw, paint, colour or make collages.
- Play simple turn-taking games, puzzles or matching games.
- Do messy play such as water play, sand play or playdough.
- Help with simple household tasks such as sorting socks or stirring whilst baking.
- Have a teddy bears' picnic or imaginative role-play game.
- Dance to music or make an indoor obstacle course.



At Christchurch Kindergarten, we believe children learn best through play, exploration, communication, and positive relationships. Technology has its place, but young children thrive when they have opportunities to play, move, talk, and connect with others.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's development, behaviour, communication, or screen use, please speak with one of our highly trained Early Years Practitioners in branch. We are always happy to offer support, guidance, and practical advice tailored to your child's individual needs.

