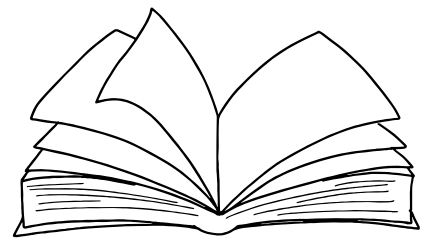


Welcome to our Web Rangers Digital Literacy Training Guide For Parents!



Web Rangers empowers children with skills and knowledge, so they use the internet and social media safely and responsibly, so they are able to champion their rights in the digital world.

We're here to help you, the digital parent, with key information and resources to assist you in navigating the challenges and making the most of the opportunities that come with raising children in a digital world.



The topic for this edition is

Screen Time and Digital Well-being



Today's children are often called “Digital Natives” because they were born into a world where internet technologies are everywhere. No matter what device they use—whether it's a smartphone, tablet, or computer—the screen has become their main portal to the digital world. Screens provide access to learning, entertainment, social interactions, and information. After the Covid-19 pandemic, screen usage has become an even bigger part of everyday life for both children and adults.

However, too much of anything can be harmful. Excessive screen time may negatively affect real-life relationships and activities. Some experts¹ are concerned about its impact on children's physical, mental, and educational development. Others caution against viewing screen time as entirely harmful², emphasizing the need to consider context. Let's explore these ideas in more detail.

What Do We Mean by Screen Time and Digital Well-being?

Screen Time refers to the time spent using devices with screens, such as smartphones, TVs, laptops, and tablets.

Digital Well-being refers to how the use of screen-based devices impacts the emotional, physical, and mental health of users, both positively and negatively.

Time spent on screens has become essential in our daily lives and is now a necessary part of education. As children spend more time on devices, you may wonder how this affects their well-being. While screen time can have its downsides, it can also be beneficial, helping children learn and grow. The key is finding a balance that works for your child.

Essential Insights - How is Screen Time Affecting My Child?

Screens offer an accessible way to keep children informed, educated, and entertained. However, too much screen time—especially time spent on mindless activities like endless scrolling or passive viewing—has been linked to negative effects on children and adolescents, including:

¹ Understanding and Mitigating the Effects and Impact of Screen Time on Children's Mental Health - Parent Guidance

² Screen time and learner well-being: the debate, the evidence and directions for future research and policy: A research brief by UNESCO MGIEP - UNESCO Digital Library.

- **Mental Health Issues:** Excessive screen use is associated with depression, anxiety, loneliness, and even thoughts of self-harm.³
- **Lack of Solitude:** Constant connectivity means children rarely have time alone with their thoughts, which can prevent them from processing their emotions.
- **Reduced Interaction:** Too much screen time can reduce quality face-to-face interactions with caregivers, which may impact language development, especially in toddlers and preschoolers.
- **Disrupted Sleep Patterns:** The blue light emitted from screens interferes with the production of melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep. This can lead to poor sleep, fatigue, and irritability.
- **Difficulty with Emotional Regulation:** Excessive screen use may make it harder for children to manage their emotions and could lead to more aggressive behaviour.

What Can I Do to Help My Child Better Manage Their Screen Time?

As a parent, there are a few things you can do to ensure your child's screen time is healthy and balanced:

- **Set Boundaries:** Establish clear guidelines for when and how digital devices can be used in the home, such as device-free times during meals, before bed, and during family activities.
- **Monitor and Discuss:** Make a habit of checking in on how much time your child is spending on screens and the content they are viewing. Have open discussions about the risks of excessive screen time.
- **Involve Your Child:** Let your child help set screen time limits. This empowers them to take responsibility and makes it easier to stick to the rules.
- **Model Healthy Habits:** Children learn by example, so it's important that adults in the home also follow screen time limits.
- **Encourage Offline Activities:** Replace screen time with activities that promote physical and mental well-being, such as exercising, cooking, or playing board games. Create a family wellness plan that balances screen time with other activities.
- **Choose Educational Content:** Guide your child to choose creative or educational content over passive scrolling or gaming when possible.
- **Watch for Signs of Dependency:** If your child shows signs of digital addiction—like irritability or a lack of interest in non-screen activities—it may be time for a digital detox. Consider setting a period where the whole family takes a break from screens to reset healthy habits.

Stay in Touch

Stay Updated: Subscribe to our newsletter for the latest in digital literacy and safety. Learn more at [Web Rangers](#).

Digital Dilemmas? Get expert advice from Agony Aunt to navigate your child's online challenges. Visit [Hash Play](#) for support.

Report Misinformation: Encounter harmful content online? Report it to [Real 411](#) for expert reviews and action against digital threats to democracy.

Follow Us: Keep up with the latest news and updates by following [Web Rangers WhatsApp](#) channel

Instagram: @WebRangersZA, Facebook: @WebRangersSA, TikTok: @WebRangersSA, and X (formerly Twitter): @MediaMattersZA

