

FAMILY MEDIA PLAN

How to Use This Plan

Making the most of screen time starts with having a plan. It's important to set *priorities* and *boundaries* around your family's media use. Start by thinking about what you want to focus on in screen time, and how screens fit into the daily routine for your family.

Creating this media plan together is a great way to include the whole family in a conversation about *healthy tech habits*. This is also a chance to practice involving each of your kids in individual conversations about their own media use.

First, choose two or three priorities to focus on. Then check out those priority pages and use the provided ideas to start a family conversation about how you will design your own media plan.

Priorities Checklist

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing on- and off-screen activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Creating screen-free times and zones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting media time limits | <input type="checkbox"/> Choosing high-quality content |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having open communication about media | <input type="checkbox"/> Using media together as a family |

BALANCING ON- AND OFF-SCREEN ACTIVITIES

- **Plan the day**

Start with sleep, meal time, and playtime, then figure out how media fits into the remaining parts of the day. Use the *Daily Scheduling Worksheet* to help visualize the way each family member will find balance.

- **Avoid using media as a first option**

When you need to calm your child, try things like a calm down corner or feelings chart to help your child work through big emotions rather than quieting them with media.

- **Delete distractions**

Remove distracting apps from your own phone to help reduce your screen time, and focus on being fully mentally and physically present when you are spending time with your kids.

Our family will create a balance of on- and off-screen activities by:

SETTING MEDIA TIME LIMITS

- **Turn off or put away devices when they are not in use**

This especially means the TV and remote, but is also important for tablets and phones. Out of sight, out of mind can help support healthy media habits.

- **Use a visual timer**

Teach your child about healthy screen time by using tools like a visual timer so they can see when screen time will end. Practice setting the timer when you turn on the screen and check in to let them know how much time is left.

- **Set clear boundaries around screen time**

Tell your child what they can do on the screen for how long, and what they can do after their screen time is over. This can help to set expectations and reduce tantrums when it's time to move on from the screen.

- **Try out "TV Tokens" or "Game Tokens"**

Your child has a set number each day or week, and can "trade them in" for a certain number of episodes or amount of app time. This approach to screen time gives your child a sense of control within your limits. It works best for older preschoolers. There's a token template at the end of this document!

Our family will set media time limits by:

HAVING OPEN COMMUNICATION ABOUT MEDIA

- **Regularly talk about media**

Make a habit of talking to your child about what they think and how they feel about their screen time, especially if you are not with them for screen time.

- **Act quickly if your child sees something scary or violent**

Talking to them about what they saw will help them process. You can use our scripts if you want some help with how to handle these conversations in a way that your kids can understand and learn from.

- **Explain what you are doing on devices when kids are present**

Kids may not understand how we use our devices for day-to-day tasks. Help them understand by explaining how you use tech as a tool. For example, "I'm writing an email to Nana to tell her about your soccer game" or "I'm using my phone to write a grocery list before we go to the store together".

- **Teach your child to recognize ads**

Many apps, shows, and online videos for kids unfortunately include advertising. Help your child become a mindful consumer by explaining what an ad is and how it convinces them to want a product.

Our family will practice open communication about media by:

CREATING SCREEN-FREE TIMES AND ZONES

- **No screens during meal times**

Screens at the table can lead to overeating and decrease family conversation. Try turning off all media in the house and introducing a “phone box” in the kitchen so everyone can see that the tech has been put away.

- **No screens in the bedroom**

Separate media from sleep. If a family member relies on video to calm down or sleep, try switching to podcasts, audiobooks, or calming music.

- **Avoid screen time one hour before bed**

Research shows that media use at night can lead to worse sleep, less sleep, and problems with focus and behavior the following day.

- **No screens in the car**

Keep screens out of the car (when possible) and help kids to talk about what they see outside. This includes avoiding texting and driving for parents!

- **Have a screen-free day each week or month**

Make it fun for the whole family! You can take a nature walk, have a picnic, do a puzzle or craft, or just spend time relaxing together without devices.

Our family will create screen-free times and zones by:

CHOOSING HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT

- **Use our media checklists as guides**

Review the *High-Quality Video Checklist* and *High-Quality App Checklist* to help you choose the best shows and apps for your unique child.

- **Try focusing on a topic or learning goal**

Choose a topic like reading or math that you want to focus on for your child, and look for shows and games that match this. Keep in mind that a show or game does not have to be labeled as “educational” to promote learning. Creativity, curiosity, inquiry, and celebrating diversity are great lessons for young children to see in media.

- **Review new shows, movies, and apps**

Take a look before letting your child see or use them. This is extra important for interactive games with many levels or mini-games included.

- **Avoid any scary, violent, mean, or adult-directed media for your child.**

Remember, just because you think something is boring or do not find it scary, this does not mean that it will not affect your child.

Our family will prioritize choosing high-quality content by:

USING MEDIA TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

- **Schedule time to use media together**

In the same way that you sit down and read a book to your child, co-use media with them by watching or playing together and discussing what is going on. Choose a regular time when you plan to co-use media together with your child, even if it is just watching a short video.

- **Make media time a family tradition**

Try having a monthly movie or game night for everyone to use media together as a shared experience. Kids can look forward to this as a fun bonding opportunity, and you can get into the habit of being actively involved in their media experiences.

- **Create media together**

Kids love to take photos and videos of their world. Give your child the chance to practice media skills by creating a short video together on your phone. You can also use this as a chance to help them connect what they see on screen and their real life to help them learn from media more easily.

Our family will prioritize using media together by:



WEEKDAY SCHEDULE FOR:

6 AM	
7 AM	
8 AM	
9 AM	
10 AM	
11 AM	
12 PM	
1 PM	
2 PM	
3 PM	
4 PM	
5 PM	
6 PM	
7 PM	
8 PM	
9 PM	

DAILY TIME GOALS

SLEEP	11 to 14 hours (ages 1-2), 10-13 hours (ages 3-5)
OUTSIDE PLAY	At least 30 minutes per day, ideally spending more time outside than on screens each day
SCREEN TIME	Less than one hour daily of high-quality educational content





WEEKEND SCHEDULE FOR:

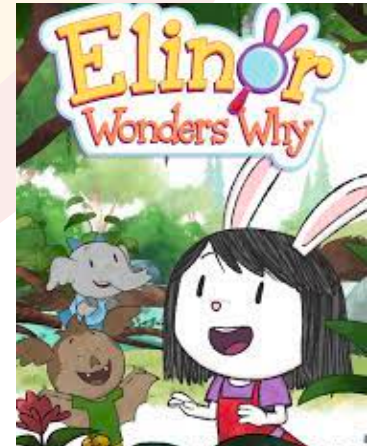
6 AM	
7 AM	
8 AM	
9 AM	
10 AM	
11 AM	
12 PM	
1 PM	
2 PM	
3 PM	
4 PM	
5 PM	
6 PM	
7 PM	
8 PM	
9 PM	

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MEDIA MENU EXAMPLE

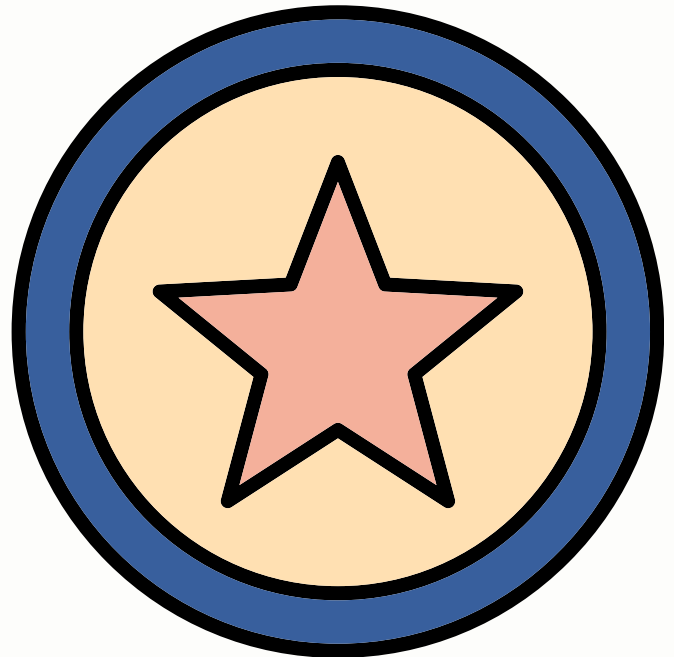
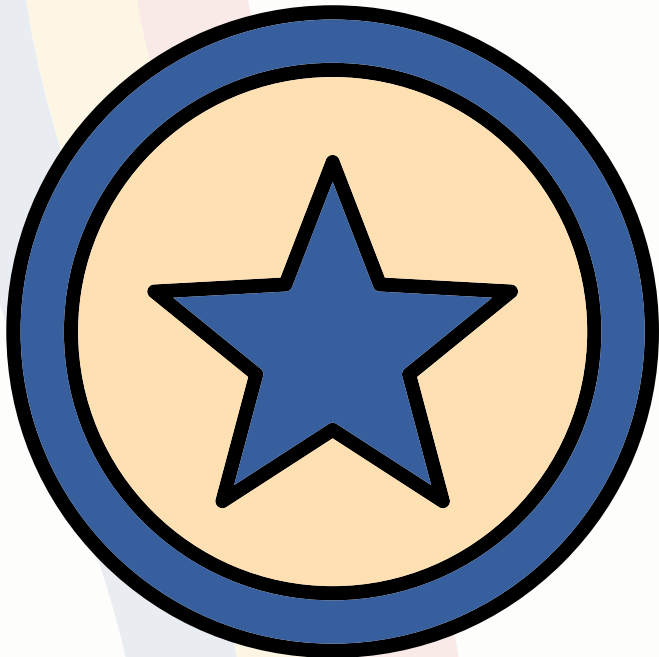
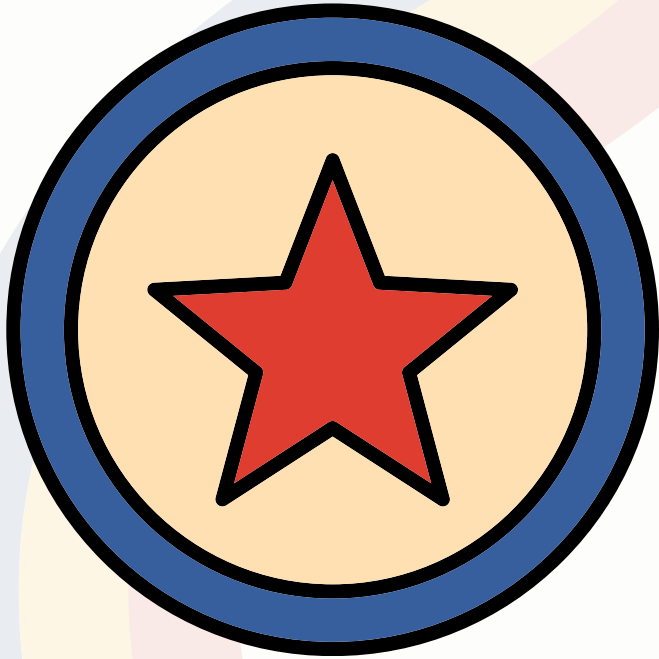


Use the grid on the next page to create a visual "media menu" for your child. Copy images of the shows and/or apps you have chosen for them to use and paste them into the squares.

MEDIA MENU TEMPLATE

MEDIA TOKEN TEMPLATE

Give your child tokens each day or week to represent your chosen amount of media time. For example, they start the day with two tokens and can trade in one token for one episode of a show.



HOLDING TECH BOUNDARIES

**IT'S OUR JOB TO
HOLD BOUNDARIES.**

**IT'S OKAY FOR KIDS
TO HAVE FEELINGS
ABOUT IT.**

It is hard to handle the meltdowns when the TV turns off. It's so easy to just let the next episode play. Why not prevent a tantrum with the press of a button, right?

**HOLDING FIRM WITH TECH BOUNDARIES IS
IMPORTANT FOR SETTING HEALTHY MEDIA
HABITS FOR YOUNG KIDS.**

Holding tech boundaries provides kids with the necessary rules for balancing the benefits of screen time with the need for real-world experiences, face-to-face interactions, and play.

Tech boundaries help make sure that technology serves as a tool for learning and entertainment, rather than a pain point.

HOLDING TECH BOUNDARIES

THE TOUGHEST TECH BOUNDARIES

There are two boundaries that caregivers find extra tough to stick to with young children:

- TURNING DEVICES OFF
- CHOOSING CONTENT

Having a script to rely on can help you more easily hold these boundaries. You can use our sample scripts and change them as needed!

REMEMBER

YOUNG KIDS CAN HAVE A HARD TIME WITH CHANGING ACTIVITIES AND BEING TOLD "NO". THIS IS TOTALLY NORMAL! YOUNG KIDS ARE STILL WORKING HARD ON BEING ABLE TO CONTROL THEIR IMPULSES AND MANAGE BIG EMOTIONS.



BEING CONSISTENT IS KEY!
WHEN YOU CONSISTENTLY HOLD TECH BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD, IT WILL HELP SET THEIR EXPECTATIONS.

HOLDING TECH BOUNDARIES

SAMPLE SCRIPTS

TURNING DEVICES OFF

Okay, the episode is over! We're all done watching TV today. Now it's time to go to the store.

I hear you, you're upset that TV time is over.

I understand it's really fun to watch shows and you want to watch more. We're going to do something else fun now.

It looks like you're feeling angry. It's okay to be angry about it. We're going to turn off the TV now and get ready for the store. Do you want to put your shoes on by yourself or should I help?

CHOOSING CONTENT

It's time to pick out your TV show for today! You can choose between _____ show or _____ show.

I hear you, you want to watch a movie. We don't have time for a movie right now. We can watch one of these two shows.

I understand, that movie is your favorite and you love it.

You're disappointed you can't watch your movie. That's okay. You can pick between these two shows or we can do something else, like read a book.