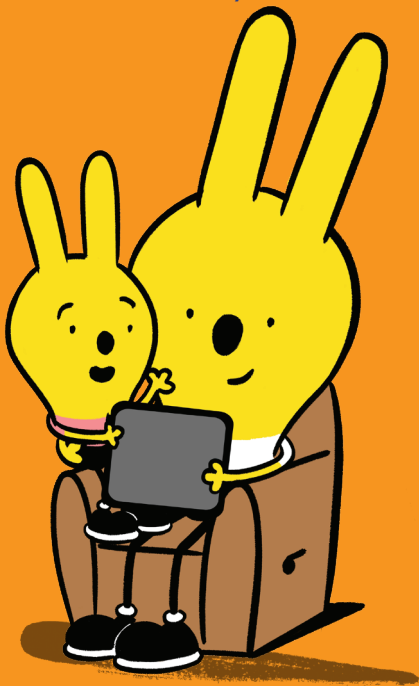


# I'm ready for screens!

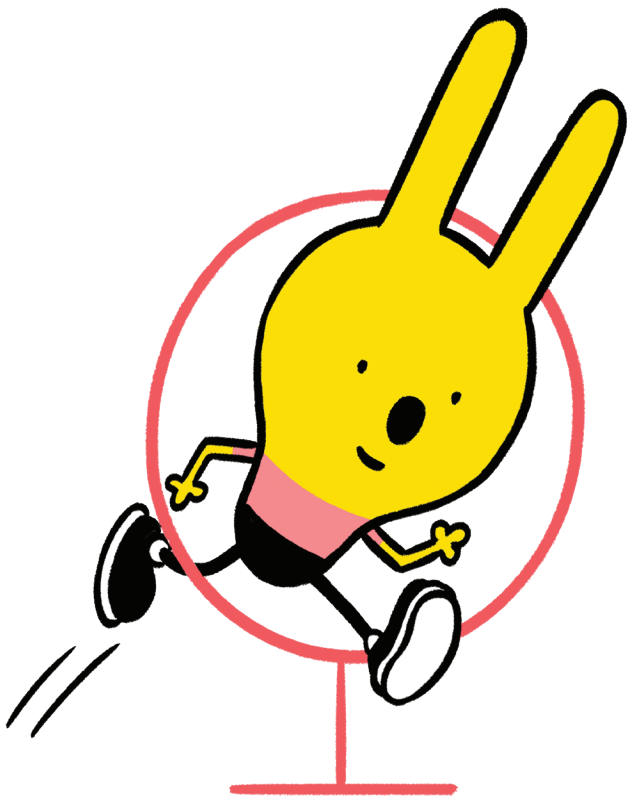
Tips and strategies for using technology  
for fun in early childhood.



# Hello adult. Welcome to my brain.

The first five years of my life are really, really important. That is when most of my brain is being wired. Scientists say that from the day I'm born, millions of neurons are making billions of connections. I'm learning all the time – at every moment of my day. Everything around me is teaching me, but the most important teacher of all is you. YOU are my interpreter, my guide, my steward, my security, and my bridge to understanding the world around me.

That world around me is full of screens, and I know how important and helpful they are for so many people, especially grown-ups! We are starting to learn more about the ways that screens can, and can't, be helpful for children like me, too! This booklet is your manual for understanding the best ways to use screens to help us grow. There are lots of tips and suggestions from the people who know best about brains, bodies, and technology! You'll notice that most of it looks like play and spending time together, and that's no accident! That's the way we all learn best! So let's make our plans for using screens the right way!



Pediatricians from all over Canada agree, here's how much screen time is safe for young children:

Age	Screen time recommendation
Birth to Age 2	Infants and very young children <b>should not use screens at all</b> , with the exception of video-calling family and friends.
Age 2-5	Limit of <b>one hour per day total</b> , and with an important adult whenever possible
Age 5+	Limit to a <b>maximum of 2 hours a day in total</b> , with an important adult whenever possible, and eliminate sedentary (non-moving) time whenever possible.

Canadian Paediatric Society (2017, November 27). *Screen time and young children: Promoting health and development in a digital world*. Retrieved November 18, 2019, from <https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children>.

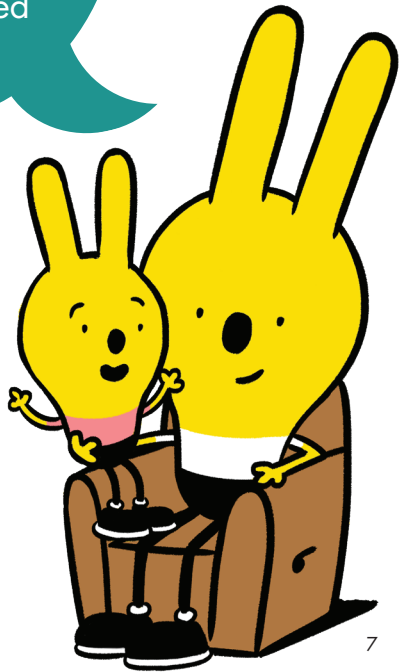
# NO screens under two?!

Not counting face-to-face video calls, specialists all over the world strongly recommend that very young children do not use screens. But why?

- **Screens exploded faster than research could keep up with!** We're only now starting to see the ways screens affect our lives, and don't fully understand yet what they do to our brains and bodies! But we *do* know, from all the years before screens, how to raise healthy, happy, thriving children without them! It's safer to follow those guidelines than risk the unknown.
- **Babies and toddlers learn best through warm, responsive interactions with other people!** We call these 'serve-and-return' relationships and they are something that screens just can't do! Most games and videos play automatically and cannot respond to us the way we need them to.
- **Skin-to-skin, eye-to-eye, and voice-to-voice contact builds brains!** If we put a screen or device between us, it interrupts those connections and delays young brains from building. For example, if someone is looking at their phone instead of their baby while they're feeding, baby is missing out on a chance to learn and grow!

**Screens  
are like sugar!**

Sometimes we need it,  
but most of the time  
it's just a nice treat to  
have, and is better as  
part of a balanced  
lifestyle!



# Displacement & 'Technoference'





A big part of using screens is making sure we aren't replacing other important things in our lives with them!

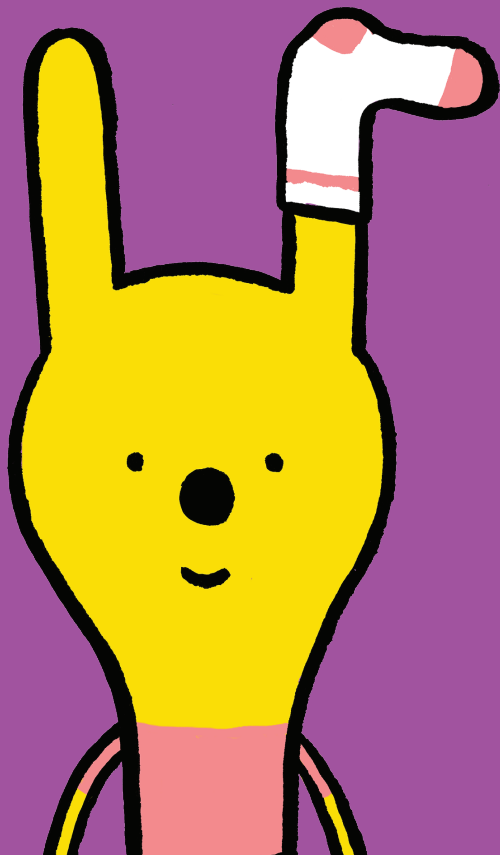
Scientists call this "displacement" or "technoference" – the idea that technology might be interfering with or taking away from things we need to be happy and healthy, like:

- Active Play & Physical Activity
- Conversation & Speech
- Sensory Input (smells, touches, tastes that we can't get from screens)
- Human Touch & Closeness
- Sleep Routines

The next pages will talk about all the things young children like me (ages 2-8) need to balance so that they're learning and growing appropriately!

Physical health and well-being

# DOING



## What does it mean?

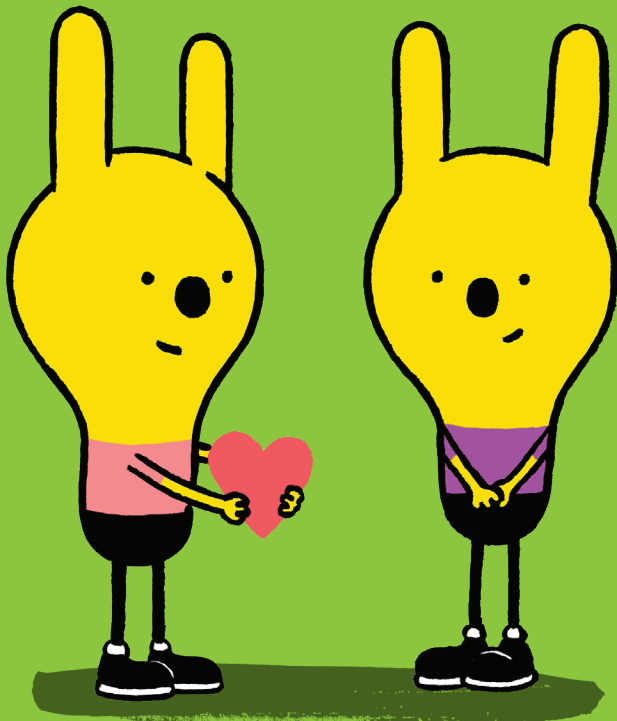
- I can move tiny things around and can use my body in big, fast, and exciting ways
- I know when I need a toilet and can use it by myself (mostly).
- I'm ready to go out: dressed, nourished and rested. I have enough energy to last the whole day.

## What do I need from you?

- Make sure my bedroom is a screen-free zone, and the last time I look at a screen each day is *at least* 30 minutes before bedtime. Use the sleep chart later in this booklet to help me get lots of sleep: teach me to listen to my body and to rest when I'm tired.
- Make sure I get at least 2 hours of exercise every day – ideally outside activities that get me breathing hard.
- Don't let me use screens on the toilet – and don't do it yourself! It makes it much harder for our bodies to healthily move waste.
- Remind me to hold screens far away from my eyes, to blink often, and to take eyeball breaks for twenty seconds every twenty minutes when I'm using a screen!
- Help me stretch my body every twenty minutes I'm using a screen, and make sure I'm not clenching or hunching!

Social competence

# PLAYING



## What does it mean?

- I can play and get along with other children.
- I'm able to follow rules, instructions and routines.
- I accept responsibility for my actions.
- I show respect for others.

## What do I need from you?

- Teach me how to be near and touch other people with permission, and teach me how to give permission for people to touch me when I want them to.
- Give me a safe environment that I can explore freely; help me learn how to manage risks.
- Make sure that we're usually looking at the same screen and talking about it together! Help me understand what we're looking at!
- Ask me what I think about things like decisions that affect me or others. Really listen to my answers and ask questions. Get me thinking!
- Show me how to be accepting of others and how to celebrate their differences. Be a good role model.
- Make sure I know how to be kind online while being careful; help me understand online and offline risks.
- Let me make art and get messy with whatever is around me. Use digital tools that help me create things too!

Emotional maturity

# FEELING



## What does it mean?

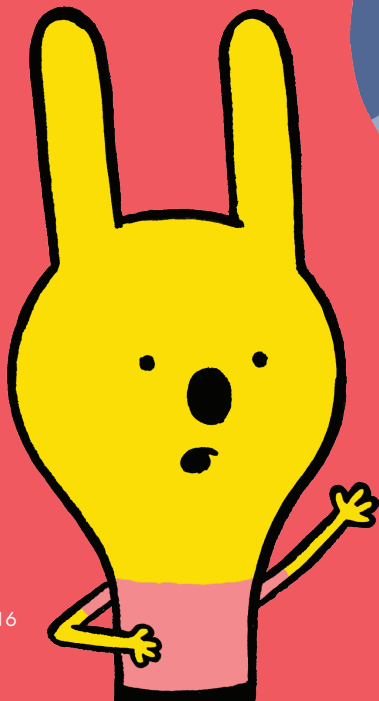
- I'm able to deal with feelings (at my age level).
- I'm strong enough to leave you once in a while.
- I can control some of my impulses and fears.
- I am able to focus on activities.

## What do I need from you?

- Make eye contact with me during reading, talking, singing, and playing.
- Teach me the right words for feelings.
- The screentime guidelines show when screens can be helpful, but if I go over these hours, you might see my behaviours change – help me notice these changes and stick to our plan!
- Be clear and consistent about what you expect for my behaviour. I need to know if routines change.
- I'm my own person so treat me with respect – you are modelling my ideas about fairness and equality.
- Let me do things by myself – I need to try. And fail!
- Make sure I have at least 5 people who are crazy about me because I need lots of teachers.
- Online relationships can be important but help me pay attention to and interact with the people who are with me in real life.
- Don't try to do it all alone. Sometimes kids and adults need extra help – know where to find it.

Language and cognitive development

# LEARNING





## What does it mean?

- I'm interested in reading, writing and telling stories.
- I can recognize letters and numbers (at my age level).
- I can recognize things that are important to me every day.
- I easily remember things (probably better than you can)!

## What do I need from you?

- Speak to me every day in the languages that you know best. Point out and name things in books and all around me.
- Read with me for at least 20 minutes every day. Let me explore lots of books!
- Give me quiet playtimes without interruptions, with things besides technology. When I am using technology, you should be there to help me use it and answer my questions!
- Give me lots of different textures and objects to explore with, so my learning can be 3D, like the world is! Help me make connections in the real world to the things I see on screens.
- Make sure that when I'm using a screen, it's for something I can *only* do on a screen – if it's something I can do in real life, let's do that instead!
- Were educators involved in making the shows and games I use on screens? Those are the ones that will help me learn best!

Communication skills and general knowledge

# EXPRESSING



## What does it mean?

- I can tell you what I need clearly and without whining.
- I can tell you factual and imaginative stories.
- I can say words clear enough for a stranger to understand me.
- I have a good understanding of my world for my age.

## What do I need from you?

- Taking turns in conversations (I say something then you respond; you say something then I respond) is the best way to build my vocabulary and talking skills. The more turns we take in a day, the better!
- After I turn 2, there are certain TV shows that **can** help me learn language (check commonsensemedia.org)! Now that my ears and brain are older, I can understand recorded sounds better. Make sure we don't watch for too long though, or those benefits start going away.
- Ask me questions that make me think, like who, what, and why?
- Help me understand privacy and respect when I'm online. Help me be a safe and responsible digital citizen.
- Learn things from me; sometimes I can teach you!

# The **4 M's** of Screen Use

## **M**ANAGE

- make a plan with your family
- be aware and engaged when using screens
- have clear expectations about online behaviours

## **M**EANING

- be sure screen use is meaningful
- make face-to-face interactions a priority
- choose appropriate content for everyone
- be part of each other's digital lives

## **M**ODEL

- set an example for healthy screen use
- have daily "screen-free" times
- don't drive or operate machinery when distracted

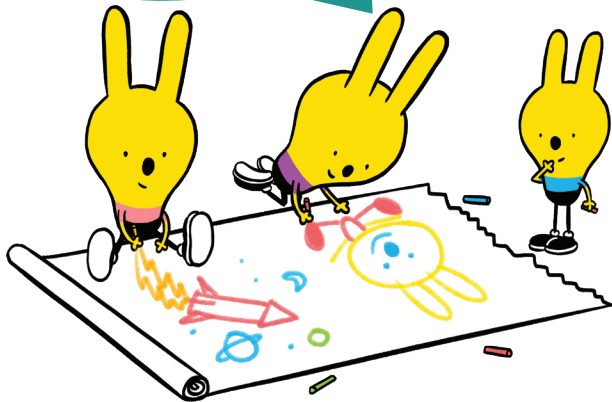
## **M**ONITOR

- watch for complaints of being bored or unhappy without screens
- makes sure screens don't interfere with face-to-face connections, sleep, eating, physical activities, or school
- watch for strong changes in emotions after watching videos, playing games, using social media, or texting

The #1 predictor  
of screen overuse  
in children is screen  
overuse in the  
important adults in  
their lives!

**50%** of kids  
say their parents use  
their screens too much

**36%** of kids  
say their parents are  
distracted by screens



# Our Family Media Plan

## Our screen-free zones are:

- our bedrooms
- our table
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Our screen-free times are:

- when we're driving (except long trips)
- during family time
- during meal time
- on the toilet
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

All devices will be turned off for the night at \_\_ : \_\_ pm and will be charged here:

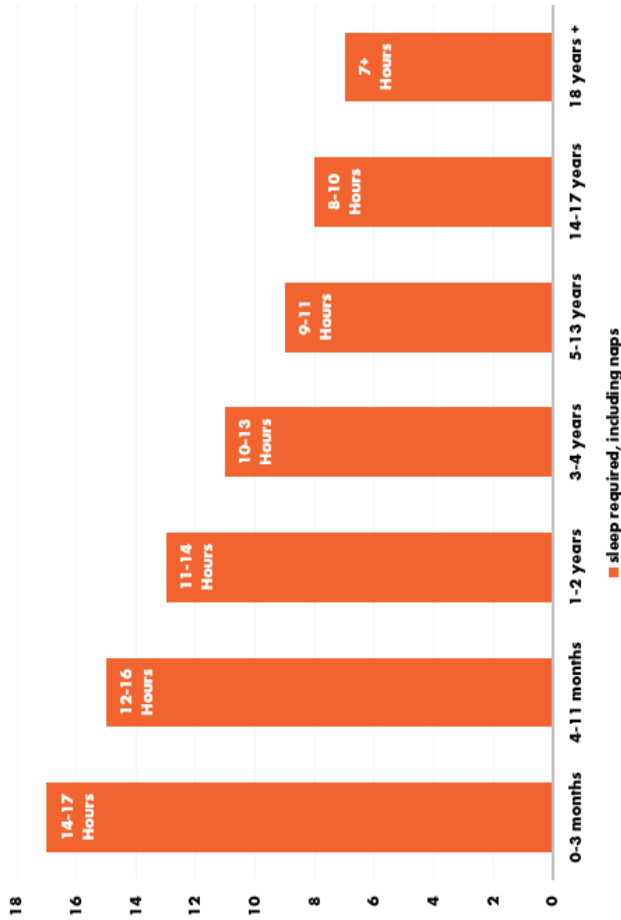
\_\_\_\_\_

We will play and watch *together* as often as we can!

When we use screens just for fun, we will:

- follow our family rules about which games are safe to play and what videos are safe to watch no matter where we are
- not download anything without permission and making sure it's safe and appropriate
- not visit new sites without asking permission first
- use media to be creative and active
- watch shows that we know are educational and age appropriate
- not spend a lot of time watching or playing when the media is fast-paced and has lots of flashing images and sounds
- use media to connect with people we love
- not share personal information, or photos online
- we will not make friends online without asking first

## How Much Sleep Do I Need For My Age?



based on the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines  
<https://csepguidelines.ca>

# Helpful Links

Center for Humane Technology – [humanetech.com](http://humanetech.com)

- *Tips to regain control of media use at home*

Common Sense Media – [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)

- *Reviews for what kids want to watch (before they watch it). Trusted ratings created with families in mind*

Healthy Children .Org – [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org)

- *The American Academy of Pediatrics' website for parents and families*

Media Smarts – [mediasmarts.ca](http://mediasmarts.ca)

- *Canada's Centre for Digital and Media Literacy*

Protect Young Eyes – [protectyouneyes.com](http://protectyouneyes.com)

- *Defending kids from online danger and creating safer digital environments*

World Health Organization – [who.int](http://who.int)

- *Global standards for physical activity, sedentary screen time and sleep in early childhood*

Calgary Reads – [calgaryreads.com](http://calgaryreads.com)

- *This booklet and more free resources available for download*





## Specialists Consulted in the Creation of this Booklet:

- Family Doctors and General Practitioners
- Medical Social Workers
- Occupational Therapists
- Ophthalmologists
- Pediatricians
- Pediatric Neurologists
- Physical Therapists
- Psychologists
- Respiriologists
- Sleep Medicine Specialists
- Speech Language Pathologists
- Educators and Children's Programmers
- Professional Caregivers



“Enjoy screens.  
Not too much.  
Mostly with others.”

– Anya Kamenetz

This book was made possible thanks to the knowledge sharing of the *Symposium on The Impact of Screen Time on Early Childhood Development* (Calgary, October 2019) and by our valued partners:



Calgary  
Regional  
Consortium



first**2000**days  
Early Childhood Development Network



Download a copy of this booklet:  
[calgaryreads.com/tukay](http://calgaryreads.com/tukay)