

# The Tutor Times™

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## How Much is Too Much Screen Time?

## Encouraging your Child's Social-Emotional Development

## Great Activities for Kids of All Ages

## Details on the Child Care Tax Credit



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# Bring the Learning Experience Home

Tutor Time® is committed to providing an enriching learning experience to every child in our care. But we also know how important it is for families to incorporate educational activities into their home as well. Here are some great things to do with children of all ages!

## Infants

Sit on the floor across from your child. Hold both of his hands and begin to swing them back and forth as you sing some of your child's favorite songs. If your child is interested, sway your bodies back and forth while still swinging your arms together.

## Young Toddlers

Place pillows (or folded blankets) in a straight or zigzag path on the floor. Invite your child to jump to the different pillows as she follows the path. Spread the pillows out farther and see if she is able to jump to them.

## Older Toddlers

Gather lightweight items such as cotton balls, scrap paper, or tissues and place them on a table. Sit across from your child and encourage him to blow the different items to you. Is he able to blow them across the table? Are certain items easier or harder to blow? Take turns blowing the items back and forth. Gather new items with different weights and try to blow those across the table.

## Preschoolers

Tell your child that the two of you are going to be making an obstacle course inside. Choose a starting point and another place you want to travel to using a certain action. For example, start at the wall and jump until you reach the chair. When you reach that destination, choose another action to do to another area in the room. Maybe you decide to crawl until you reach the table. Continue moving to different areas of the room with your child. Invite your child to come up with suggestions.

## School-Agers

Ask your child to think of some type of action or movement they think they can do continuously for 30 seconds (jumping jacks, touching toes, push ups, etc). Ask your child to tell you how many of these they think they can do in that time period. Count the number they complete. Was their guess correct? If your child is interested, have them try another action or see how many they can do in a longer time period.

# Social-Emotional Learning Begins at Home

**“Research has shown that children are more accepted by peers when their parents are warm, responsive and in tune with their children. In contrast, children tend to have more difficulty getting along with peers when parental interactions are hostile and controlling. In other words, an adult-child relationship that involves listening to one another, cooperating, and displaying mutual enjoyment provides a model for interacting with others.”** — *(Riley, San Juan, Klinkner, & Ramming, 2008, p.54)*

As we start a new year, we would like to thank you for enrolling your family in Tutor Time and for the trust you place in our teachers every day. We truly see our relationship with you as a partnership, and believe this philosophy is essential for our continued success. But it is also important to partner with your family to ensure your child's social-emotional success.

We know that the home environment is the first “community” your child belongs to. How you and other family members interact at home with your child sets the stage for how s/he will interact with his/her teachers and peers at school. By treating children as respected and valued members of their family, you are modeling behaviors that will transfer to other communities like our school, a club, or even a sports team that your child is a part of.

By supporting social development at home, you are empowering your child to succeed in life. Here are some strategies to enhance your child's success in their social-emotional development:

## Share Control with Your Children

Adults need to set limits and boundaries to keep everyone in the family safe and healthy. However, one way to share control with children is to focus on what they can do, rather than on their limitations. Try letting your child make their own decisions around things like what clothes to wear, which type of fruit

to pick for a snack, or how many forks to put on the table for dinner.

## Listen and Talk to Your Children

Children have a lot to share, so anytime is a good time to talk. We just need to take the time to listen. Try to set aside “special time” each day to talk with your child such as during a nightly bath or before a bedtime story. Your full attention shows that you think their thoughts are important. Remember to ask questions to learn about their feelings, ideas and thoughts.

## Reflect on What It Means to You to Be a Parent

Let your children know how wonderful and rewarding it is to be their parent. Share memories with others (in front of your children) of special times you have spent with your family. This lets your child know what it's like and what it means to be a parent, and how to take care of and nurture others.

Your child will benefit socially and emotionally through nurturing relationships at home, positive interactions at school, and consistency and collaboration between home and school. Teachers and parents can work together to help young children grow into socially mature adults who feel valued by others.

*If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you'd like to see explored in future issues of this monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at [education@tutortime.com](mailto:education@tutortime.com). We would love to hear from you!*

# How Much is Too Much Screen Time?

In today's electronic world, we are surrounded by screens broadcasting images that draw us in like moths to a flame. Televisions, DVD players, computers, gaming systems and smart phones all fall into this broad category of “screens.” But how much screen time is healthy for your child?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of five spend no more than 1-2 hours a day in front of a screen. And they don't recommend screen time at all for children under the age of two.

Unfortunately, a recent survey found that 75% of young children exceed this amount ... with some children sitting in front of a screen for a whopping five hours a day. Experts have identified some risks that go along with excessive involvement with these forms of technology, including, but not limited to the following.

- According to a report issued by KidsHealth, the passivity and mindless snack munching associated with “screen time” leads to higher incidences of obesity.
- The average child witnesses 200,000 acts of violence on television by the time they are 18. Young children cannot differentiate between real and pretend (even when we tell them it's not real). Exposure to this kind of violence can lead to aggressive behaviors or anxiety.
- Many television shows and games portray unrealistic ideals, stereotypical behaviors and/or warped relationships between people. Research into this topic has confirmed that consistent exposure to these images can lead to early sexual behavior, poor body image, excessive dieting, substance abuse and unhealthy views of people who are different from oneself.
- Excessive screen time can also impact academic performance. There is no critical thinking involved in much of the consumption of technology. In many cases, the brain can basically go into a trance and simply be entertained. Between this lack of engagement and time spent away from studies, screen time can have a detrimental impact on children's performance in school.

Based on the research about excessive screen time, the American Academy of Pediatrics has made the following recommendations:

- Keep screens out of the bedroom. It is much more difficult to monitor the use of technology if children have it available in their rooms. Keep screens in public areas where adults can see what is being viewed and/or played.
- Monitor screen use, especially with very young children.
- Make it interactive. Play games that require movement and some critical thought. Watch television as a family and have conversations about what you are watching.
- Model healthy habits. Turn off the television during meal times or when no one is watching. Show your child there are other ways to occupy time and relax without the use of a screen.

- Limit screen time. Sit down with your family at the start of each week and determine what you are going to watch on television. Set limits as to how much time can be spent on games and other types of technology.

Of course, the challenge for any family is to keep children entertained so that you can accomplish what needs to be done (or even just catch a few minutes of relaxation). Use any of the five ideas below to occupy your child in ways that are more likely to stimulate the brain instead of putting it to sleep:

- Art Box – add glue, paper, magazines, crayons, old greeting cards, leftover wrapping paper, fabric scraps and other fun materials to a box. Bring out the box whenever your child is looking for something to do.
- Recycle Basket – store cardboard boxes and tubes in a basket. Your child can use these to build and create when they are bored.
- What If Questions – get creative juices flowing by telling stories that start with “What if?” For example, “What if you woke up and had wings? What if suddenly the world was covered with ice?”
- Scavenger Hunts – how fast can you collect 10 things that have numbers from anywhere in the house? Who can be the first to find five blue items?
- Go Outside – all ages can benefit from spending time outside. Even 15 minutes in the backyard can provide emotional, cognitive and physical benefits for your child. Take advantage of the free gift that is nature.

Technology, like almost everything else, can have benefits in moderation. As a parent, it is up to you to support your child in developing the ability to be a smart consumer of all the technology choices that are available.

## 2010 Child Care Tax Credit

Did you know that you may be eligible to receive as much as \$2,100 in savings through the federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit? For every dollar that you spend on child care, you can save some money on this year's tax bill. All you have to do is fill out IRS Form 2441, which you can download here: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f2441.pdf>

## Creating Character

One of the books we will use this year is *Frederick* by Leo Lionni. In this classic story, a group of mice work to prepare for the upcoming winter. All of the mice seem hard at work, except for Frederick; it appears that he is slacking. However, what the other mice learn during the hard winter is that everyone has something to contribute to the team.

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