

How to Swap Screen Time for Active Play: Kids Age 5 -12

Make room for play.



- The Canadian Paediatric Society suggests limiting screen time to less than 1 to 2 hours per day for older children. Make family rules that limit how much screen time your kids are allowed each day, and stick to them.
- Avoid making television watching part of your regular daily routine.
- Explain to your kids the importance of outdoor and active play and establish active play as the norm at an early age. This also helps reinforce that minimal screen time is not a punishment.
- Eliminate background TV. If the TV is turned on — even if it's just in the background — it's likely to draw your child's attention. If you're not actively watching TV, turn it off.
- Throughout the school year, after-school is a key timeslot for kids. Register your child in active after-school programs in the community, encourage them to participate in intramural sports, and arrange active after-school playdates with their friends.
- Make screen time active time; challenge the family to see who can do the most push-ups, jumping jacks or leg lifts during commercial breaks.
- Tell sitters and relatives that when they're with your kids, screens go off and active, fun time is expected.
- Kids naturally play more actively when they're outdoors, so send them outside, or better yet, head out with them.
- Before you switch on the TV or the computer for your children, stop and think – could they spend the time being active and have some 'small screen' time later on?
- Don't allow a TV, computer, or cell phone in your child's bedroom. Keep them in a common area of the family home so you can monitor use.
- Have a list of active indoor and outdoor games or activities, so you can suggest alternatives to watching TV or playing on the computer.
- Unplug for a day. Designate one day a week or month as a screen-free day for the whole family.
- If your kids need an extra push away from screens, plan active family outings, like skating, hiking or a family yoga class.



Share your own tips for balancing screen time by connecting with us on twitter **@ParticipACTION**