

## The 5 rules that helped us find a healthy balance for screen time

I will [start](#) by saying that I don't think that our approach is better than others. Each child is unique and every parent has different opinions on how screen time should look like for their kids.



But if you are looking for a balanced way to deal with screen time I hope that you'll find some good inspiration here. These 5 easy rules helped us handle screen time without struggles and for us, it was the best way to deal with technology.

### **1. Carefully select the programs that your child has access to.**

I'm convinced that the negative effects that screens have on kids are highly influenced by the quality of the programs that the children have access to.

We only choose apps and programs without commercials and with a clearly defined content. We cannot control what the kids see during cartoon commercials or what movies they get to see while navigating on Youtube. On the other hand, it's a lot easier

to get high-quality content if we select good educational apps or choose recommended programs on Prime Video or Netflix.

At this point, when my son is 5, he has access to 3 apps on my tablet (the one that he uses the most is Lingokids, a great educational app for young kids) and 2 series (a cartoon series on Prime Video and a documentary series on Netflix). We also have a few movies on DVDs and some on Prime Video that we [watch](#) on family movie nights. His favorite movie is "[Inside Out](#)" and we watched it maaaany times at movie night.

## **2. Don't use screen time as punishments or rewards**

We don't use any punishments or rewards with our son because we prefer to use positive discipline strategies. But some time ago I had an experience that showed me the negative effects of using screen time as punishments or rewards and I want to share this tip with you.

## **3. Discuss with the child about the effects of screen time on their brain.**

A conversation about the effects of screen time can be a very powerful way to convince kids why limits are important.

[Here is a great article written by Kelly from \*Happy You Happy Family\*](#) where she offers a very helpful trick for limiting screen time. The conversation that she shares in the article can be a great inspiration on how to discuss this topic with your child.

I used her approach with my son and he loved the idea of "Brain Food" and "Junk Food". This approach helps me explain to him why we don't watch certain things on TV or why we don't download certain apps.

## **4. Pay attention to the moment of the day when the child spends time in front of screens and set the rules in advance.**

We don't have strict rules or times for screen time but I do follow two rules:

- My son is not allowed to use screens in the first part of the morning. That time of the day is the one when his brain is the most active and receptive

and I want him to use that time making something creative or learning through play.

- Also, he is not allowed to spend time in front of screens before bedtime. This makes him more agitated and grumpy and makes bedtime a lot harder for all of us. The only exception to this rule is family movie night.

We both agreed on these rules so we don't have any struggles about them.

Also, anytime when my son asks me to give him my tablet or allow him to watch an episode on the TV we sat down and agree on what he wants to do and how much time he needs to spend in front of screens.

It's a lot easier to agree on a rule beforehand than to try to convince him to handle me the tablet while he is playing. He knows that rules are important and that I need to be able to trust his word so he usually holds his promise and returns the tablet after the agreed time.

Setting a timer on the tablet is the easiest way to keep track of the time without the need to constantly remind him when he needs to return the tablet.

## **5. Use connection to end screen time without power struggles**

Sometimes he wants to play more and I let him do this because I think that flexibility is important. But there are also times when I know that I need to set a firm limit.

For those cases [I use the approach that Lauren shared on her blog](#). The idea behind her approach is very simple and effective: children are more likely to listen if they feel connected to us. The same thing happens when we try to gain the child's cooperation for ending screen time.

View whole link here! <https://playfulnotes.com/limit-screen-time-kids-and-technology/>