

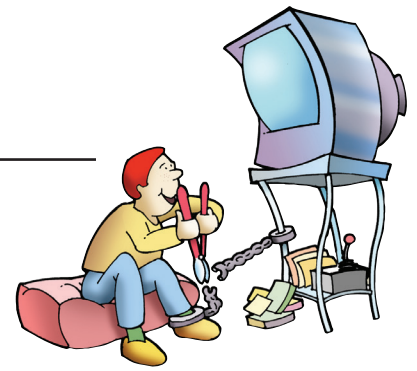
Play More, Watch Less

National Screen-Free Week, May 4–10, 2015

National Screen-Free Week is an annual celebration of the magic of being unplugged. During this week, parents, children, teachers and others across the country turn off screen media — including TVs, video games, computers, tablets, e-readers, cellphones and smartphones — and get in touch with being unplugged.

Use this time to take a look at your family's screen-use habits. How many hours are spent using a screen compared to doing other activities? Here are some ways to change these habits:

- Create screen-free zones in the home. Establish one spot for storing and recharging everyone's handheld devices.
- Gather the family and come up with a list of alternative activities to sitting in front of a screen. Jot down lots of ideas and post them on the refrigerator. (See suggestions on reverse side.)
- Make changes gradually. Set limits. Experts recommend no more than two hours a day of recreational TV, computers, video games and DVDs for kids.
- Know what your children, of any age, are watching on TV, doing on the Internet and seeing on their smartphones. Ask them open-ended questions about what they're seeing and doing. Ask them whom they are communicating with when emailing and texting.
- Take TVs out of bedrooms. Sleeping with the TV on, even with the sound off, can disrupt sleep patterns and contribute to fatigue.
- During meals, turn off the TV and put away other distracting screens and electronic devices. Instead of using them, talk about everyone's day.
- Keep the TV and other screens off unless someone is watching them.



Did you know?

Average U.S. home has 3 TVs; 56 percent have 3 or more.

59 percent of U.S. homes with TV have digital cable.

90 percent of U.S. homes with TV also have a computer with Internet access.

Approximate hours of TV watched per week:

- **39** by women over age 18
- **35** by men over age 18
- **24** by youth ages 12 to 17
- **26** by children ages 2 to 11

Reducing TV time can help prevent excess weight and obesity.

For children under age 3, screen time is linked with sleep problems.

Screen-Free Week is a program of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, <http://screenfree.org>.

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Instead of sitting in front of a screen...

Families

- Plan and prepare meals together.
- Visit a park or public library.
- Go on a picnic.
- Play charades or board games.
- Take a walk down the street and collect litter.
- Dance and sing to music (check your library for music CDs).
- Have a family talent night.



- Plant a garden, and tend it daily.
- Plan a dream vacation or party.
- Walk around the neighborhood and talk about different houses, trees and gardens.
- Catch up at mealtimes (“Share one good thing and one bad thing about your day...”).
- Assign everyone a housekeeping chore, schedule a time to do them and celebrate when they’re done.
- Catch up on letter writing, cards and phone calls.

Adults

- Read a book or magazine. Find an author you like and read everything she or he has written.
- Look for and try new recipes.
- Do stretching exercises or yoga.
- Clean out a closet, the garage or the basement.
- Find a new hobby or dive in to a neglected one.
- Plant flower seeds indoors. When they have sprouted several inches, transplant them outside.
- Volunteer in your community.
- Clean under the refrigerator and stove.
- Hand-wash woolen sweaters.
- Set up an easy-to-use recycling station.
- Read a local newspaper.
- Organize family photos and write picture captions.
- Start a scrapbook about your family.
- Gather and give away old clothes and household items.



Teenagers

- Think about future careers or jobs. Write a story about yourself being successful in that career or job.
- Volunteer.



- Interview your favorite relatives and record their stories.
- Write poems or short stories.
- Plan and plant a vegetable garden. Create a weeding schedule for the family.
- Sing along to your favorite music. Try writing down the lyrics and understanding the song’s meaning.
- Do stretching exercises or yoga with friends.
- Find a cause, such as saving the earth, that interests you and get involved with a friend.
- Make a list of things you want to learn. Visit the library for books on those subjects.
- Find a recipe that your family really likes and practice making it so that it becomes your specialty.
- Take up a new hobby or sport that interests you.
- Dance or exercise to music.

6 to 12 years

- Play hide and seek indoors or outside.
- Make a list of what you like about yourself.
- Play flashlight tag in the dark.
- Play board games, cards, or memory or dictionary-based games.
- Crafts: Make greeting cards or wrapping paper, bead necklaces or bracelets. Weave friendship bracelets. Macramé a hanging plant holder, necklace or bracelet.
- Learn to play a musical instrument and practice every day.
- Set a goal to learn something new or to save money for something you want. Create a plan to achieve your goal.
- Write letters to a grandparent or favorite relative.
- Write a play for family members to act out.
- Stand on one foot and try to keep a balloon in the air using your hands and other foot.



Under 6 years

- Practice spelling new words, including names of family members.
- Play with water with bowls, cups and spoons on a protected surface in the kitchen.
- Make a tent out of blankets and “go camping” indoors.
- Have a parade with simple musical instruments.



- Practice writing letters, numbers and your name.

What parents can do:

- Create toy boxes that can be rotated by day or week (adds an element of surprise).
- Make available plain paper, old magazines, safe scissors, markers or crayons, and tape.
- Keep a dress-up basket full of clothing and safe accessories.
- Put a long line of masking tape on the floor to use as a balance beam.
- Create an obstacle course in the yard.
- Have lots of books available (board books and picture books). Visit your local library.
- Provide puppets and encourage children to put on a puppet show.