

## Planning screen-time

Reducing the amount of time your child spends viewing television or computer screens may mean developing a plan regarding screen-time, and keeping to it. This may include:

- Not placing screens in play spaces and bedrooms.
- Not allowing screens to be viewed during meal and play times.
- For children over two years, only turning the television on for specific programs, rather than having the television on in the background. This means that your child isn't watching screens unnecessarily.

Encouraging your child to help with household tasks, such as tidying up clothes and toys or unpacking the shopping, is another way to break up long periods of inactivity. Not only does it get your child moving, it will help you out too!

Plans that reduce non-productive inactivity for the whole family will help everyone to form healthy habits.

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# GET UP & GROW

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD



## Decisions about down time

### A balancing act



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing



**‘Sedentary behaviour’, or physical inactivity, refers to time spent doing tasks that require very little energy. All children need quiet down time, but children who spend long periods of time being inactive may be at greater risk of poor physical, social, language and intellectual development.**

**Balancing inactive time with active time ensures that your child has the opportunity to develop in a range of ways. Some inactive time spent on productive activities is necessary for your child’s health and development, but other inactive tasks are not necessary. Reducing the amount of time spent on inactive, unnecessary tasks during early childhood will benefit your child.**

## Productive tasks

Some examples of necessary or productive quiet activities include sleeping (especially for young children); reading and looking at books; and creative play such as arts and crafts, puzzles or drawing. Unnecessary or non-productive sedentary behaviour includes watching television, playing computer or electronic games, and long periods of time spent restrained in high chairs, car seats or strollers.

Maintaining a healthy balance between active and inactive time requires planning. Replacing some periods of inactivity with more active options is a great way to increase daily physical activity. Be sure to allow some time for useful quiet activities – imaginative down time is just as important as physical activity.

There are Australian recommendations regarding sedentary behaviour, which can act as a guide for the amount of time children spend in front of electronic screens.

Current recommendations advise:

- Children under the age of two years should not spend any time on screen-based activities.
- Children aged from two to five years should spend less than one hour per day on screen-time.
- Children from birth to five years should not be kept inactive or restrained for more than one hour at a time, with the exception of sleeping.

## Setting up healthy habits

Plan your child’s day to include time for puzzles, drawing or reading together, as well as chances for free movement and active play. There are many ways to set up healthy habits in your family, many of which can be spread throughout the day.

Set aside enough time to walk or pedal to local destinations, instead of always taking the car or stroller.

Start a collection of simple play items with your child, which can include cardboard boxes and containers, old clothes for dress ups, buckets or balls. This encourages more creative and productive use of down time, rather than just viewing screens.

Make sure you keep play items in a space that your child enjoys, and where they can reach them easily. At times, change play items to include new options. It may also be useful to ask friends and family to think of play options or presents that increase (rather than decrease) opportunities for physical activity.

