

How much daily TV, mobile phone, and computer use is reasonable?

Important: The recommended times are for leisure use. For homework, additional time may be required. On special days they may be longer – but then shorter on another day to make up for this.

- 5–7 years: maximum 30 minutes
- 7–9 years: maximum 45 minutes
- 9–12 years: maximum 60 minutes

Warning signs of a developing addiction

- Your child spends an excessive amount of time with entertainment media.
- Your child reacts aggressively if he or she is not allowed to use entertainment media.
- Your child's school performance deteriorates.
- Your child neglects other activities and his or her friends.

If several of these signs are apparent together over a prolonged period, you should respond and seek advice if necessary

Benefits of entertainment media

- Fun, relaxation and diversion
- Knowledge and information
- Communication and exchange with others
- Skill and responsiveness

Dangers of entertainment media

- Dependence
- Sensory overload and concentration problems
- Excessive demands
- Neglect of other interests
- Physical inactivity and obesity
- Escapism

Advice and information

Counselling services

If problems with setting and enforcing rules arise, please contact the youth counselling or youth and family counselling service in your area. Addresses are available from:

www.jugendberatung.me or call the Parents' Emergency Hotline: Tel. 0848 35 45 55

If you are worried that your child uses entertainment media too often and is developing a dependency, contact the addiction prevention experts in your area.

Addresses: www.suchtpraevention-zh.ch/ueberuns/regionale-stellen or Tel. 044 634 49 99.

Centre for gambling addiction and other behavioural addictions Zurich: www.spielsucht-radix.ch or Tel. 044 360 41 18.

Internet links

www.suchtpraevention-zh.ch/selbsttest

Self-testing and information about internet usage (German)

www.jugendundmedien.ch

Information about media education and use (German, French, Italian)

www.security4kids.ch

Child safety on the Internet (German, French, Italian)

Ordering information material

- Additional copies of this leaflet and
- the leaflet: „The Internet: supporting children and young people. Tips and suggestions for parents of 11- to 16-year-olds.“

can be ordered from: www.suchtpraevention-zh.ch/Publikationen → Informationsmaterial → Familie or Tel. 044 634 49 99. Orders in the canton of Zurich of up to 100 copies are free. Both leaflets are available in other languages.

Miscellaneous information material for parents from „Sucht Schweiz“: www.suchtschweiz.ch/info-materialien/paedagogisches-material/eltern (German, French, Italian)



Mobile, Television, Computer

Avoiding dependence

Tips for parents of 5- to 12-year-olds

Englisch

Die Stellen für
im **Suchtprävention**
Kanton Zürich

Television, game consoles, mobile phones, computers and the internet are part of everyday life for children. They are entertaining and exciting, and offer diversion, information and communication possibilities. Phone and the internet (Skype) allow contact with distant friends and relatives. However, these devices can also make excessive demands on children and lead to dependence.

Learn to deal with this early on

This leaflet gives you, as parents, tips on how you can encourage your children to use these entertainment media – television, game consoles, mobile phones, computers and so on – in a low-risk way. The sooner children learn to use these media sensibly, the better, because patterns of behaviour once learned can be difficult to correct later.

Ground rules for low-risk use

Be a role model: Children learn how to use entertainment media above all in the family. Therefore it is important that you as parents think about your own dealings with media and that you use entertainment media responsibly.

Do not leave children alone: Children usually learn very fast how to use these devices independently, but they need parents with whom they can talk about their experiences. As a parent you should say which content you consider good and which not, and justify your attitude. In this way children develop media awareness and learn to use media critically.

Set limits and agree rules: As parents you should establish clear usage times and check that they are adhered to (note the recommended media times on the back of this leaflet). The ability to limit consumption prevents the development of addiction.

Television and game consoles

Television is the first entertainment medium that many children encounter. Movies and electronic games are attractive to many children.

Tips: Select shows and games with your child, and pay attention to the age recommendations. Discuss and set a time limit on combined television and gaming time and turn the equipment off afterwards. Do not have a TV set in the child's room.

www.flimmo.tv Television programme advice for parents.

www.bupp.at Age recommendations for computer games.

This leaflet is **available in several languages:** Albanian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish.
The ordering address is overleaf.

Mobiles and smartphones

A mobile phone is far more than just a telephone. Children also use it to send and receive text messages, pictures and videos, to listen to music, and to use the game and internet functions.

Tips: Younger children usually don't need a mobile phone. To protect against high costs and problematic content, mobile phones with few functions and prepaid cards (which allow payment in advance) are recommended.

www.handywissen.at/infos-fuer-eltern
Information for parents about mobile phones (German/English)

www.projuventute.ch/primobile.1869.0.html
Mobile phone contracts suitable for children (German, French, Italian)

Computers and the internet

Computers are used by younger children, especially as play equipment. Older children work with computers for school and use the internet in many different ways (e.g., Facebook, games). New portable devices (such as iPods) make it possible to run games and other applications outside the house.

Tips: Select games appropriate to your child's age and limit their use. Inform children about the possible dangers of the internet (risk of addiction, problematic content such as violence or pornography, misuse of personal data, viruses, etc.). There are programs that block web sites and set time limits.

www.spieleratgeber-nrw.de Advice on computer and console games (German)

www.blind-kuh.de Search engine for children (German)

www.seitenstark.de Children's web sites, with information for parents (German)

What Parents Can Do

- Show an interest in the media preferences of your children and find out about them.
- Explore the various media together with your child and discuss their advantages and drawbacks with him or her.
- Educate your child about possible risks (dangers on the Internet, mobile phone costs, etc.).
- Establish clear usage times with your child and ensure that they are adhered to.
- Choose movies and games that are appropriate to the age of your child.
- Encourage your child to spend enough time, aside from with these media, in other activities and with his or her friends.
- Make a point of deliberately switching off all entertainment media around your home, thereby facilitating shared family experiences without media consumption.
- Do not set up a television or computer in your child's room. Agree upon rules about when and where a mobile phone may be used.
- If you have doubts, sharing them with other parents can help. Support and advice can also be found at a counselling centre.