



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

How Young is Too Young: Using Technology Responsibly



There has been an explosion of software games, videos and educational programs aimed at young children, including babies, all claiming to be tools for learning and fun, and encouraging more electronic media use and more “screen time”

for children at an early age. But, how young is too young for a child to use a smart phone, laptop, tablet, or even watch TV/DVDs? For several years, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has discouraged any amount of screen media and screen time for children ages two or younger and recommended no more than one to two hours of total screen time per day for children older than two. However, seeing the current reality of young children’s interest in and easy access to technology tools, the AAP convened a Media Research Symposium in May to re-examine their policy and discuss the existing evidence base about how media affects children’s health and well-being.

This month’s newsletter will focus on some of the following key messages from the AAP Media Research Symposium that encourage parents in the responsible use of electronic media in a way that supports their child’s healthy development.

- ♥ **Modeling is critical.** Limit your own media use when children are around.
- ♥ **Content matters.** The quality of content is more important than time spent with media.

Prioritize how your child spends his time rather than just setting a timer.

- ♥ **Co-engagement counts.** Family participation with media encourages social interactions and learning. Your engagement (through questions and discussions) is essential for your child’s understanding.
- ♥ **Playtime is important.** Unstructured playtime stimulates creativity. Prioritize daily “unplugged” playtime, set reasonable limits, especially for the very young.
- ♥ **Create tech-free zones.** Limiting technology during family mealtime or in your child’s bedroom encourage family time and healthier eating and sleeping habits.

In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child’s healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of how your child develops when you do these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

The first two years of your child's life are a critical time for his brain development. During this time, responsive interactions between you and your child are essential to his early brain development, affecting his physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development. Why does the American Academy of Pediatrics currently say "no screen time" for infants and toddlers? Very young children learn best by relating to real people, moving around, and interacting with their surroundings. A child is more likely to



engage in higher level interactive play—exploring, experimenting, and interacting and learning with others when there are no electronic media distractions (TV, tablets, etc.).

The following are some ways to integrate technology with your infant's activities.

- ♥ **Reading an e-book** – When reading together, read with expression, ask questions, and talk about what you are seeing. Keep in mind that E-books should be used in addition to actual books; infants do need the experience of holding a book and turning the pages.
- ♥ **Viewing digital photos** – For a quick activity, show your child photos of people and/or objects that are familiar to him. As you view them together, talk about the photos. For example, describe the person, say who it is, how your child knows him/her, and recount what is happening in the photo. You can extend your child's learning by visiting the person or pointing out and labeling the objects that he had just seen, such as animals or flowers.

Activity for Infants: *See, Show, Say*

Materials:

Cloth or board books (or e-book) with sturdy pages that have simple, colorful pictures

What to Do:

1. Read lots of books with bright, colorful pictures
2. Pay attention to his eyes as you read a familiar book. If he looks at something on the page when you read about it, pause and talk about it, pointing to what you are describing. For example, "This dolphin is big. This myna bird is small."
3. Ask questions like "What does the dog say?" Then follow with a simple answer: "The dog says 'Bow wow.'"
4. Let your baby touch the book, point to pictures, and name the objects. As your child gets older, encourage him to participate.
5. Remember that babies' attention spans differ greatly; young babies can pay attention for only a few seconds!

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

It may be common to see your toddler push buttons and flip switches, and respond to bright lights and noises. With all the colors, movement, and sounds of technology, toddlers are drawn to TV, tablets, or smartphones. However, it is important to use technology tools effectively with toddlers, within the context of conversation and interactions with an adult, and keeping in mind that AAP currently discourages any amount of screen media and screen time for children 2 or younger.



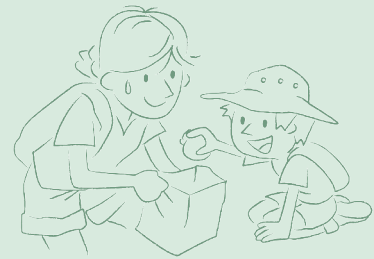
The following are some ways to integrate technology with your toddler's activities.

- ♥ **Video chat** (e.g. Skype or Face Time) with loved ones –Encourage your child to dialogue with the person, responding to both the words they are saying and the facial expressions he sees. Since toddlers have a short attention span, keep the conversations short or encourage the person to interact with your child in ways that he is interested (e.g. read a favorite story, do a puppet show, etc.)
- ♥ **Connect screen time with play time** – Integrate technology to enhance activities. For example, take photos of premade block towers on a tablet, talk about how they are made, and have your child choose which one he likes the most. Then bring out blocks and have him make his own tower with your help.

Activity for Toddlers: *Nature Walk Scavenger Hunt*

Materials:

- Magazine with pictures of outdoor items (e.g., flowers, insects, colors)
- Scissors (for adult use only)
- Glue or tape
- Paper
- *Variation: tablet, smart phone, camera with photos of outdoor items



What to Do:

1. Together look at photos of outdoor items. Talk about what the object is and where you have seen it before. For example, "This is a picture of a white plumeria. There is a plumeria tree in the park across the street."
2. Make a scavenger hunt list by cutting out the pictures and gluing (or taping) the pictures onto a piece of paper. Write the name of each item below it. If using a tablet, put the photos in a slideshow or photo gallery so that you can scroll through the photos easily.
3. Together, go outside with your list or photos and walk around your neighborhood and try to find all the items on your list. Talk about where the most likely place is for you to find the items. For example, "Let's look for an ant. Where do ants live? Let's lift up some rocks to see if we can see any in the dirt."

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Preschoolers

According to the National Association for the Education for Young Children, technology is a tool that can support the development and learning of preschool-aged children and older, when used in intentional and age-appropriate ways and in conjunction with other traditional tools and materials. If you choose to introduce electronic media to your child, it's important to identify clear strategies to manage its use, be an active participant with your child's learning, and to be intentional in how your child is using it.

The following are some strategies for integrating technology with your preschooler's activities.

- ♥ **Digital cameras.** Encourage your child to take digital photos to document their learning interests, favorite books, activities, and special friends. Use his photos to have him create digital journals and storybooks. You can capture photos of block buildings or artwork that he has created or video his dramatic play to replay.

(Continued on page 6)

Activities for Preschoolers: *Create Your Own Book*

Materials:

- Photos or magazine pictures
- White glue, glue stick, or tape
- Stapler
- Blunt, child-sized scissors
- Blank sheets of paper, index cards, or thin cardboard (such as a cereal box)
- Pencil, pen, or washable markers

*Variation: tablet or computer with photos loaded (camera to take photos) and word processing software, slideshow, or photo book application/software



What to Do:

1. Ask your child what he'd like his book to be about or suggest a type of book that you think he'd be interested in. For example, animal, feelings, numbers, or letters book.
2. Invite him to cut out photos or pictures of items such as toys, people, vehicles, or animals to make his book. You can even draw pictures together. If using a tablet, take photos of various things that he wants to make a story about.
3. Put the book together by showing him how to glue or tape the pictures onto pieces of paper. If using a tablet or computer, add the photos into a word processing document, slideshow, or book making application. Together, put the photos in order to tell a story.
4. Take turns thinking of a sentence or two for each picture and write (or type) them above or below the picture.
5. Staple or tape the pages of the book together.
6. Read the book together or ask your child to tell you about the pictures in the book.
7. Ask him questions about the pictures in his book. For example, if you made an animal book, ask questions such as "What kind of sound does this animal make?" "Where does that animal live?"

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others
- ♥ Learn to cooperate with others

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Develop skills needed for writing

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Recognize math concepts like numbers, sizes, shapes, sequences, volume, measurement, and time.
- ♥ Develop early math skills

Kids in the Kitchen

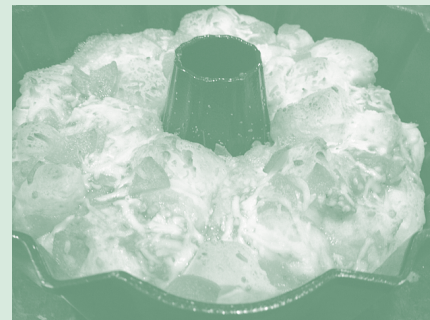
Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show him how to safely handle the items and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing any food.

Easy Pull Apart Pizza Bread

Adapted from: <http://sweetandsimpleliving.com/easy-pull-apart-pizza-bread/>

Ingredients:

- 2 cans of ready-made pizza dough or biscuits
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- 2 T of Italian seasoning or parsley flakes
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil
- 1 – 8 oz package of pepperoni, cut in halves
- 1 cup parmesan cheese
- 9 x 13 pan (or bundt pan)
- Large bowl
- Optional: $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fresh garlic, minced or garlic powder



Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cut the pizza dough or biscuits into quarters. Talk about how four quarters make a whole.
3. Have your child put the cheeses, Italian seasoning, olive oil, and pepperoni into a bowl and stir it together. Talk about how the ingredients blend to make a mixture.
4. Add the dough pieces into the bowl and mix well so that the oil is spread evenly on each piece of dough.
5. Have your child help put the mixture into the pan.
6. Bake for about 30 minutes or until the top is brown and the center is thoroughly cooked. While it is baking, ask your child how he thinks the ingredients will change and how it will taste.
7. Cool before eating and enjoy!

Preschoolers *(continued)*

- ♥ **Internet and apps.** You may want to start introducing touch screen or computer based (using the mouse, keyboard) technology with your child. When selecting apps or software, think about the content, if it is appropriate for your child's age, and whether it is allows your child to explore and create at his own pace.



Community Resources

Screen Sense

http://www.zerotothree.org/parenting-resources/screen-sense/screen-sense_key-research-finds_final3.pdf
Research-based guidelines for screen use for children under 3 years old.

Common Sense Media

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>
Site that provides unbiased information, trusted advice, and innovative tools to help families use media and technology as a positive force in all children's lives.

Suggested Books

Recommended by **Hawaii State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Press Here by Herve Tullet

This book instructs the reader on how to interact with the illustrations to create imaginative images.

Hello! Hello! by Matthew Cordell

Lydia escapes from her digital gadget-addicted family to say hello to a world of color. She encounters a field of flowers, a horse who knows her name, a T.Rex, a blue whale and more.

Preschoolers

Tea with Grandpa by Barney Saltzberg

In this sweetly simple, rhyming picture book, a little girl tells us about her daily tea ritual with her grandfather where they sing and laugh and clink their teacups with the help of their computers and a video chat.

Doug Unplugged by Dan Yaccarino

Doug the robot discovers that cities are much more than downloaded facts when he unplugs from the computer feed and explores one first-hand.



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