

Screen time may slow learning skills, study finds



Screens are a part of daily life for many families—but too much screen time in the early years could slow a child's language development, a new study suggests.

That's because young children learn best when they can touch, explore and play with real objects, Sarah Kucker, a psychologist at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, USA. said.

"When learning a new word like 'banana,' for instance, it is important that a child can feel its texture and see it from all angles to see that it's 3D and has a distinct smell," she explained.

"Just seeing a picture of a banana or a quick cartoon video of them doesn't give the same information."

In other words, watching something on a screen is not the same as real-world play.

Kucker recommends keeping screen time low, especially during the first few years of life. That is when kiddos are forming meaningful brain and language connections that are best built through hands-on experiences.

But not all screen time is bad. In fact, some digital media can support learning, especially when it is social.

Kucker offered four simple tips to help parents make screen time more effective:

- **Ask why you are using the screen.** If the goal is just to keep a child calm or distracted, consider other tools like deep breathing or giving them a squishy toy.
- **Use screens socially.** Video chatting with family members like Grandma helps kids learn back-and-forth conversations. Two-person games like puzzles also help children talk, listen, and learn.
- **Pick interactive media.** If the app or video lets your child just sit and watch, they may not learn much. Look for media that asks questions or connects to your child to the world around them.

- **Balance screen time with real conversation.** Make sure your child still hears lots of words from real people. Even simple actions—like narrating while you cook or clean—can support their growth.

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