

SCREEN TIME + DHH CHILDREN



Though screen time may offer great educational opportunities and provide entertainment, there are significant implications for overall development, especially in speech/language, social skills, and cognitive skills. These effects can be seen in both hearing and deaf/hard-of-hearing (DHH) children.



Technology advancements within the last two decades have led to screens and media being much more accessible. The first-generation iPhone was introduced in 2007, the same year Netflix introduced streaming services. The first iPad was released in 2010. Though television and video games have been around for decades, they have never been so portable and accessible. Due to this rapid change, numerous bodies of research and professional organizations have studied the implications and put out guidelines for screen usage in children. Studies have found screen time to significantly affect language development, social interaction, attention, executive functioning skills, academics, cognitive development and physical activity.

SPEECH + LANGUAGE

While language development is crucial for all children, it is especially important for DHH children to limit screen time as they rely heavily on visual information for communication. This may be through signed language, speech reading, facial cues, and other information gathered from their environment.

Excessive screen time can limit opportunities for face-to-face communication and interaction, which are essential for language learning.

Research has shown that parents who are just learning sign will still positively influence their child's language skills*. Other research has shown that DHH children with hearing parents can predictably and consistently develop age-level vocabularies at rates similar to native signers.**



SOCIAL SKILLS + OVERALL HEALTH



Screen time can reduce opportunities for children to engage in face-to-face interactions. These interactions play a key role in the socio-emotional development through skills of development of social skills, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Face-to-face interactions are especially key to DHH kids as this develops self-advocacy and communication breakdown repair skills. Reduction of these opportunities can lead to difficulty in forming meaningful relationships and overall social isolation, which is especially prevalent with DHH kids due to communication barriers***.

COGNITION

Children's brains grow rapidly, constantly forming connections that shape how they learn, think, and focus. Real-life experiences like talking, playing, moving, and exploring all help build strong brain pathways. Too much screen time can limit these experiences and may slow the development of important thinking skills.

Executive function includes skills like planning, organizing, focusing, managing emotions, and completing tasks. Excessive screen time can make it harder for children to develop these abilities, leading to shorter attention spans and more difficulty concentrating and following through on tasks.



RECOMMENDATIONS

UNDER 2

- The **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** calls for no screen time until 18-24 months
- THE **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommends no screentime for children under 2.

AGES 2 - 5

- The **AAP** recommends 1 hour or less of screen time per day
- The **WHO** recommends less than 1 hour a day .

*Exceptions are made for video calls (e.g., FaceTime, videophone, Zoom)

REFERENCES

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