



Before age 8, less screen time is better

This document compiles 10 evidence-based recommendations drawn from recent scientific research and public health guidelines, aimed at promoting safe digital environments and protecting the mental health of children between 6 and 8 years old. We recommend adapting these guidelines to each family's specific context.

DC DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP — Building autonomy

1 Set simple rules

Communicating rules clearly and explicitly helps children internalize norms and gives them security. Offer simple options for compliance. Set your rules at: healthychildren.org/English/fmp/Pages/MediaPlan.aspx

2 Encourage boredom and free play

Boredom drives creativity, frustration tolerance, and the ability to delay gratification. Screens, by offering passive gratification, inhibit these experiences and displace movement and social interaction.

3 Communicate with age-appropriate language

Between ages 6 and 8, children begin to understand concepts like advertising, privacy, and right vs. wrong. Use concrete instructions they can understand. This strengthens their critical thinking.

DW DIGITAL WELL-BEING — Physical and mental health

4 Limit screens to a maximum of 1 hour per day

When digital leisure exceeds one hour, it displaces essential habits like sleep, play, learning, and face-to-face interaction. Include study and homework time within this limit.

5 Protect sleep stability and quality

Devices interfere with sleep quality. Establish a screen “parking lot” outside bedrooms 1 hour before bedtime. Ages 6 to 8: 9 to 11 hours of sleep per night.

6 Create screen-free zones and times

No screens at the table, no devices during car rides, no screens in bedrooms. This ensures mindful attention and encourages family conversation.

NN THE NON-NEGOTIABLES — Protection and safety

7 Do not give them their own smartphone

Mobile screen use alters brain development. Blue light suppresses up to 99% of melatonin. If they need to communicate, use a smartwatch or basic phone without internet.

8 Restrict social media use

Children are not emotionally or neurologically prepared to manage social media. Algorithmic design can expose them to inappropriate content. Social media: after age 16.

9 Install parental controls

Use native tools (Apple Family Sharing, Microsoft Family Safety, Google Family Link) or Qustodio. Strict controls for sexual and violent content.

10 Stay attentive to content

Do not allow solitary screen use. Turn this time into an active dialogue space where you help them filter inappropriate stimuli and understand what they observe.

How do screens affect children?

During this sensitive stage, screens negatively interfere with the development of fundamental skills:

Learning to self-soothe

Using screens to calm children hinders the development of self-regulation mechanisms. The brain becomes fragile when facing boredom and depends on external stimuli. Acknowledge, validate, and accompany your children's emotions.

Language and social skills

These skills are learned through dynamic interaction with other people. Screens are unidirectional and replace opportunities to practice verbal and social interactions, impoverishing emotional vocabulary.

Delaying gratification

Platforms offer constant rewards without requiring effort, overloading a still-immature nervous system. As a result, children perceive activities that require patience and sustained effort as boring.

99% of melatonin is suppressed by blue light from screens
— Pediatric chronobiology research

Note: The recommendations presented here are informational and intended to guide digital well-being. They do not replace personalized professional advice. Each family should adapt these guidelines to their own context and needs. Prepared by Viviana Quintero as part of a consultancy for UNCOLI.