

# An App or Your Lap?



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Since we live in a world that is continuously advancing technologically, it is no wonder that the amount of screen time we all encounter has increased. However, is this optimal for young children? Perhaps we need to stop and ask ourselves the following questions:

- Is the young child benefitting from what's on the screen or is it merely an electronic babysitter?
- Is high-tech play displacing the following opportunities in your child's life: face-to-face interactions with people, parent-child verbal interactions, play-based movement (crawling, walking, climbing, jumping, dancing), manipulating and playing with small toys, the ability to wait (delay gratification), outdoor play and exploration?

It often seems that an increase in screen time seems justified as many apps are marketed as educational. While educational apps are useful for teaching letters, numbers, colors, and shapes, they aren't effective at teaching skills such as self-regulation, empathy, social skills and problem-solving.

True play allows children to use their own imagination and sound effects as well as learn to share, take turns, negotiate, compromise and solve problems. In contrast, a child is often silent and sedentary when engaging with a device because it provides all the power and sound. Furthermore, the iPad finger doesn't support the fine motor skills needed to write, cut with scissors, or button a shirt. Nor can the iPad compete with the sensory rich experiences that making mud pies, building forts, and riding bikes provide!

Traditional Play	Virtual Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct contact with the world</li> <li>• Active play that encourages movement, manipulation and sensory experiences</li> <li>• Fosters social interaction</li> <li>• Children are able use their imagination</li> <li>• Teaches kids to deal with real life situations (actual consequences)</li> <li>• Encourages creativity</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indirect contact with the world</li> <li>• Passive entertainment that discourages movement</li> <li>• Deprives children of social interaction</li> <li>• Children are being instructed or entertained</li> <li>• Teaches kids to turn off/walk away when they are frustrated (pretend consequences)</li> <li>• Wires children to need constant input</li> </ul> 

Develop a screen time plan. The American Academy of Pediatrics has a way to create a personalized FAMILY MEDIA PLAN. To access the Family Media Plan, visit [HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan](http://HealthyChildren.org/MediaUsePlan)

## Always choose the lap over an app!

There is no app you can purchase that will ever be more important to your child's development than the TIME you spend playing with and talking to your child!