

# Managing children's screen time: What parents need to know

October 17 2013

---

In our increasingly fast-paced world, the Internet, video games, smartphones and TV programs are continually competing for consumers' attention. But what are the effects of screen media on infants and young children, when it's exchanged for the playtime of generations past?

Brenda Greenert Judd, an early childhood education specialist at the University of Cincinnati's Arlitt Child and Family Research and Education Center, will present her review of the national research on the topic during a session on Saturday, Oct. 26, at the Early Childhood Education Symposium at The Summit Country Day School.

Judd says, "Children, even infants, are engaging in more screen media, and a review of the national literature suggests that by substituting screen media for traditional, creative play, [children's](#) cognitive, physical, social and emotional development can be affected."

"Parents and educators need to question the skills, brain and language development that is taking place in the early years and decide when and how to introduce screen media into children's lives," says Judd.

Judd cites the world's leading early childhood theorists in emphasizing that [young children](#) gather and process information through physical, social and creative play. Through traditional play that includes running, jumping, building with toys and pretend play, children not only build their physical strength in bones and muscles, but also strengthen their fine motor skills and learn social skills through their interactions with other children.

Judd's review of screen media research indicates that the saturation of screen media among children – some as young as infancy – can impact speech and movement (fine and gross [motor skills](#), hand-eye coordination), plus the isolation factor of screen media can affect social development. The fast-paced music and flashing lights of video games can lead to irregular sleeping patterns. Judd says the sedentary factor of screen media has been blamed in part for the nation's growing obesity epidemic in children. She says the research also has shown that the violent content popular in video games also has led to aggression, fear and anxiety in young children.

Judd says she wants parents to be aware that screen media time needs to be monitored, but adds that some programs or games hold positive value for children. Games that teach skills by drill – repetition – have resulted in positive learning outcomes for some children. For children with special needs, particularly children with autism, Judd says iPads have opened up a world of communication.

"Skype has served as a wonderful tool for children keeping in touch with grandparents and other relatives who live far away," says Judd. "Some games involving physical activity have indicated some health benefit for children who are inside the home because of the weather, or for other reasons that inhibit playing outside.

"So, there are benefits for children when screen media is used appropriately," says Judd. "Parents just need to set limits to keep children from being saturated with it. Parents also need to be aware of what their children are watching and whether the program is age-appropriate for their children."

"The research has not kept up with the progression of the technology, so we're not really sure what young children are gaining through screen media game-based learning, and it could take generations to find that

out," says Judd.

Judd earned her master's degree in curriculum and instruction from UC's College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services (CECH), as well as a bachelor's degree in [early childhood education](#). She also holds a special education license endorsement. As an [early childhood](#) education specialist at UC's Arlitt Center, she teaches the center's preschool-age children and serves as a mentor to UC's students who are aspiring to become future teachers.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

Citation: Managing children's screen time: What parents need to know (2013, October 17) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-10-children-screen-parents.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--