

Recommendations for Parents/Guardians

# Digital Habits of Children during Leisure Time



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## About this Brochure

This brochure is for parents/guardians with children aged 0-18.

**The recommendations in this brochure are about children's and adolescents' screen use during leisure time. This includes social media, video clips, streamed movies, television and computer games.**

The following types of screen use is not included:

- listening to music, radio and podcasts or reading e-books,
- school-related screen use,
- digital aids for children and adolescents with functional disabilities,
- digital tools for various community services.

The recommendations from the Åland Islands are a revised version of Swedish guidelines produced by the Public Health Agency of Sweden. They are based on knowledge from scientific literature, surveys and dialogues with children and adolescents, parents, and youth organisations.

The recommendations are divided into different age ranges. At the beginning of the brochure there are also recommendations about your own digital habits. These are just as important as those that apply to your child.

More detailed information can be found in a guide available at [www.regeringen.ax](http://www.regeringen.ax)



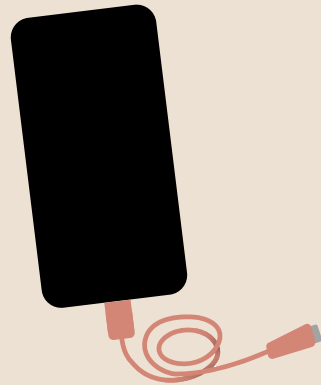
# The Importance of Your Own Digital Habits

Research shows that parents may have poorer interactions with their children due to screen use. For example, a parent using a mobile phone is less attentive to their child's needs.

For children to be healthy and happy, they need to feel that their parents see, hear and understand them. Parents and other adults are important role models for children. If these people have good screen habits, there is a better chance that the children also will.

## Recommendations for You

- Think about how you use digital media when you are with your child and reflect on whether you need to limit your screen use.
- Keep in mind that your own screen habits can also affect your child's screen habits.
- Many of the recommendations aimed at young people between 13 and 18 years of age are also relevant to you as an adult.



## Children 0 – 2 years



### For those who have Children Aged 0–2

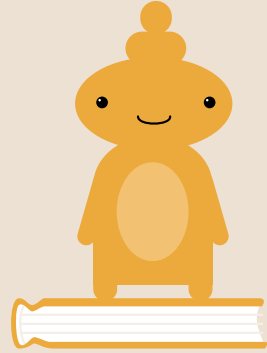
- Children under 2 years old should preferably not use screens at all. However, it can be okay to have a video call with a relative, or to look at photos with an adult.
- If an older sibling is using digital media together with a child under two years of age, consider joining the children to discuss and explain the content in a way that both the older and younger child understand.

Small children develop when people around them talk, play, read, or sing with them. It is also important for children's motor skills development that they move, explore, and play a lot.

Research also shows that sleep is an important prerequisite for small children's health and development, and that screen use can lead to poorer sleep.

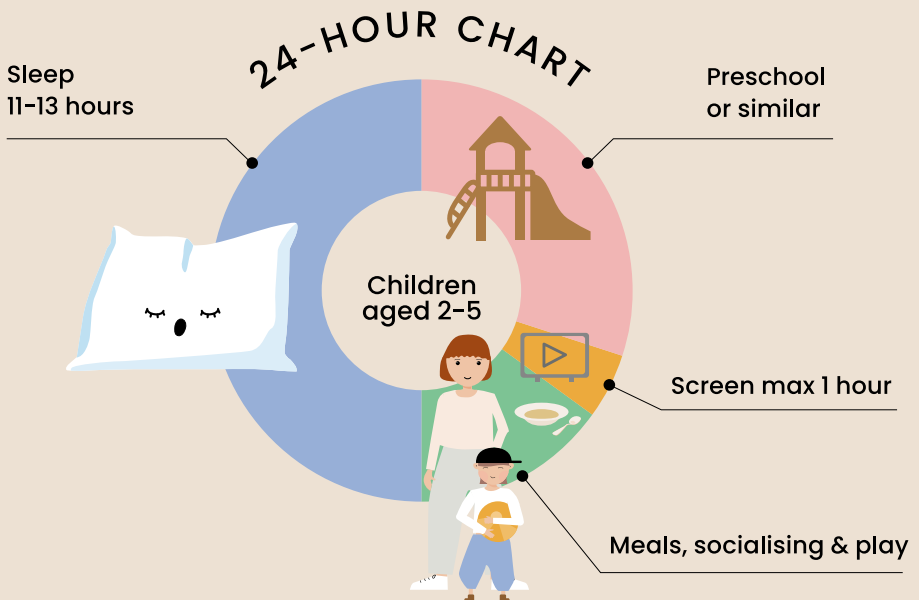
Children under the age of 2 cannot absorb content on digital media because their eyes and cognitive abilities are not yet sufficiently developed. From what is known today, screen use does not appear to have any positive effects on the health of such young children.

## Children 2 – 5 years



### For those who have Children Aged 2–5

Set clear limits on screen use to ensure it doesn't take too much time away from other activities. The general recommendation for children between 2 and 5 years of age is a maximum of one hour of screen time per day.



- Strive to ensure that children do not use screens when it is time to sleep (turn off screens 30-60 minutes before bedtime).
- Create routines at an early age by leaving mobile phones, tablets, and similar devices outside the bedroom during the night.
- Agree on family rules for screen use that everyone understands. Put aside all screens when eating, socialising or doing other things together as a family.
- Actively monitor the content your child accesses. Choose age-appropriate apps that are free from advertising, algorithmic control, or unknown or inappropriate content.
- Create good habits and routines for your child to get a balance between sleep, physical activity, social interaction, play and learning. Control your child's screen time so that it doesn't interfere with these activities.
- Make the screen use that takes place at this age a joint activity. Watch together with your child and talk about what you see. Early conversations about what you do online make it easier to talk about such things when the child is older.
- Don't use screens to provide comfort or distraction when your child must do something they don't like. Children need to practice governing their emotions.

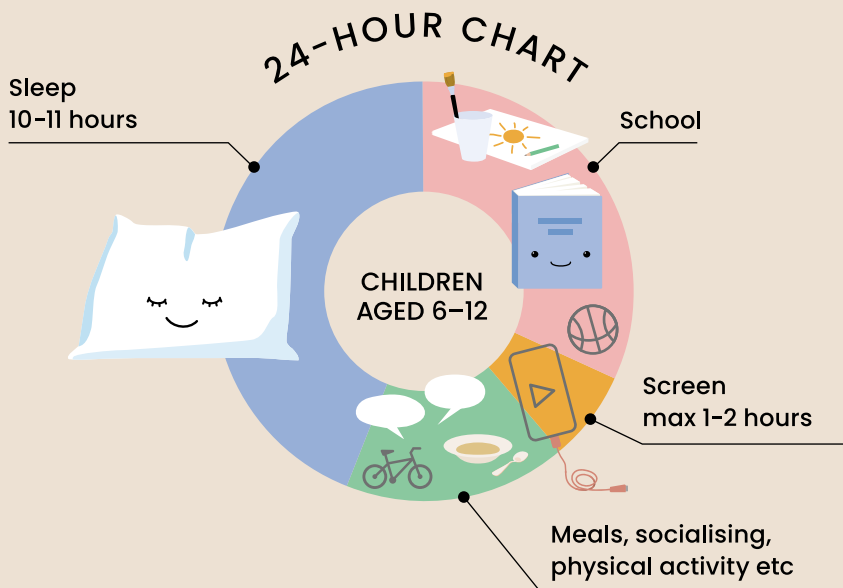
## Children 6–12 years



### For those who have Children Aged 6-12

Try to balance everyday life so that screen use does not take too much time away from other activities. Agree on rules and approaches for screen use. Support your child in sticking to what you have agreed.

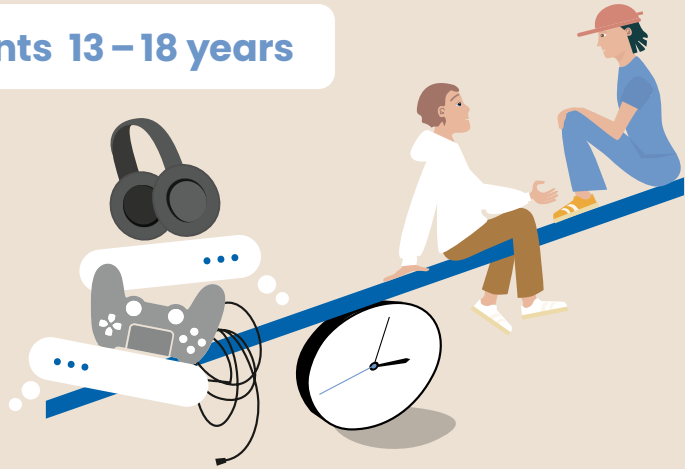
A general recommendation for children between 6 and 12 years of age is a maximum of one to two hours of screen time per day.





- Strive to ensure that children do not use screens when it is time to sleep (turn off screens 30-60 minutes before bedtime).
- Create routines at an early age by leaving mobile phones, tablets, and similar devices outside the bedroom during the night. Make sure your child uses another alarm clock than the one on a mobile phone.
- Agree on family rules for screen use that everyone understands. Put aside all screens when eating, socialising or doing other things together as a family.
- Discuss screen use (e.g. age limits) with parents of your child's classmates and other friends. It can help if several children and adolescents have similar rules and routines at home.
- Actively monitor the content your child accesses. Choose age-appropriate apps that are free from advertising, algorithmic control, or unknown or inappropriate content.
- Talk to your child about what they are doing online and how they can be affected by digital media. Follow the age limits that exist for, e.g., video sharing services, social media and games. Be curious and engaged.
- Talk about what it means to be a courteous user and contribute to a positive online community, e.g. by thinking about tone and language use.
- Keep watch for content containing violence, restrictive gender roles and unhealthy body ideals. Talk to older children about the fact that certain content may be unpleasant or frightening and ask them to contact an adult if they are exposed to such content.
- Create good habits for your child. Talk about what you need to feel good and help them find a balance between schoolwork, sleep, physical activity, leisure activities, social relationships and screen use.

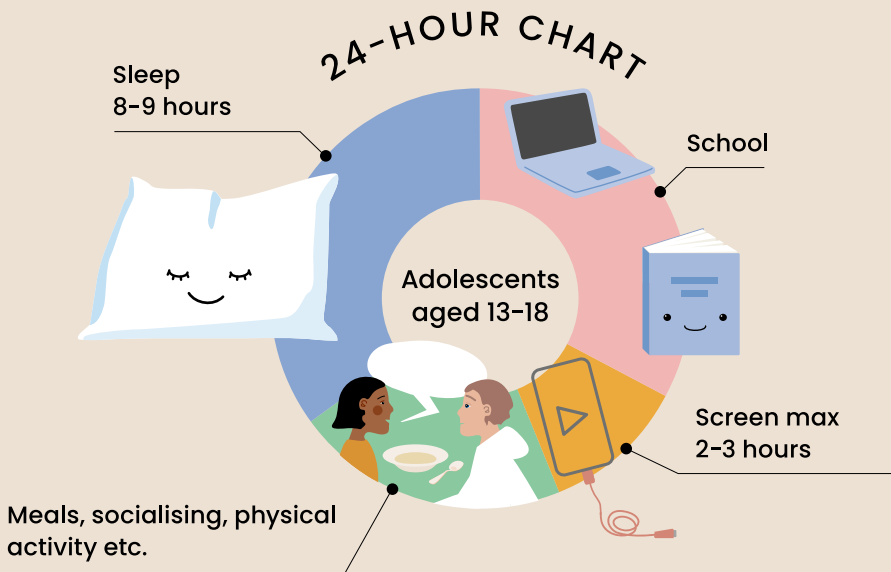
## Adolescents 13 – 18 years



### For those who have Children Aged 13-18

Try to balance everyday life so that screen use does not take too much time away from other activities. Agree on rules and approaches for screen use. Support your child in sticking to what you have agreed.

A general recommendation for children 13 and 18 years of age is a maximum of two to three hours of screen time per day.



- Strive to ensure that children and adolescents do not use screens when it is time to sleep (turn off screens 30-60 minutes before bedtime).
- Make sure that mobile phones, tablets, and similar devices are left outside the bedroom during the night and that your child uses another alarm clock than the one on their mobile phone.
- Agree on family rules for screen use that everyone understands. Put aside all screens when eating, socialising or doing other things together as a family.
- Discuss screen use (e.g. age limits) with parents of your child's classmates and other friends. It can help if several children and adolescents have similar rules and routines at home.
- Actively help your child to follow the recommendations on digital media and sleep, as well as the age-appropriate recommendations.
- Be engaged and curious about your child's digital life. Have an open dialogue about what they are doing and experiencing online, and generally about how they are feeling. Try not to judge.
- Talk about what it means to be a courteous user and contribute to a positive online community, e.g. by thinking about tone and language use. Talk about how to act if the child or someone else is subjected to something.
- Determine whether your child has unhealthy screen use and look for signs of ill health. Provide support if needed.
- Talk about what your child needs to feel good and help them create good habits and a balance between schoolwork, sleep, physical activity, leisure activities, social relationships and screen use. Adolescents may need help controlling and limiting screen time.

## Organisations Offering Support

The Children's Internet is an initiative from Save the Children in the Åland Islands. Save the Children works for children's safety both online and offline. As a parent, you can also book a conversation or a parent meeting.

Save the Children Sweden has #Nätsmart, a guide on how adults can talk to children and adolescents about sexual abuse online.

Swedish BRIS (Children's Rights in Society) is also available residents of the Åland Islands. Please contact BRIS support line for adults at +46-771-50 50 50 if you are an adult and if you have questions or need support regarding children.

Ecpat Adult Support is a place for all important adults in the vicinity of children. Here you can get help, support and knowledge about children's sexual vulnerability – online and offline.

More detailed information about how to contact those organisations can be found at [www.regeringen.ax](http://www.regeringen.ax)

