

Tips for surviving the school holidays without too much screen time

The school holidays are almost upon us and as much as you can try to keep the kids stimulated and entertained, it can often be a challenge.

As they crave being connected with their friends outside of the school gates and urgently want to fill their free time with games and group chats, device usage does typically increase and is often a cause of conflict within the home.

With a few helpful strategies up your sleeve, however, this doesn't have to be the case. See below for some simple yet effective tips on how to keep the device-usage peace these school holidays.

1. Have a Family Meeting

Boundaries need to be set for device usage and the best way to do this is to have a family meeting where everyone is involved in the decision-making process. This is the most effective way of ensuring everyone sticks to any rules and makes kids feel seen and heard which is really important.

2. Give warnings before screen time ends

Don't just announce that it's time for devices to be put away immediately, this will create conflict and resistance. Give your kids a half-hour warning and then a 10-minute warning to let them know that their time is almost up. When it's time to shut down, it won't be a sudden shock to the system.

3. Use Parental Controls (so they can't access adult content)

To avoid your kids seeing or watching content that is for adults, ensure you have set all parental controls on their Apps, games, and devices. These can usually be located within the platform settings. This also goes for privacy settings.

4. Establish no-tech zones

Kids have a habit of wandering around the home, eyes down, head buried in their iPad or tablet. This creates anti-social behaviour and zero structure to their usage. Create areas within the home that their devices are not allowed to enter. The kitchen, lounge room, and bathrooms are a great start. This can help limit their usage and encourage them to interact and do other activities if they want to enter these zones.

5. Don't use screen time as a reward...or a punishment

Threatening to take away a child's device can push them to try and sneak screen time so it is not recommended to use it as a punishment. On the other side, try to avoid offering it as a reward as screen time should be seen as a privilege and used within the rules and boundaries set within your family meeting. Offering more time as a reward goes against the rules you have set.

The school holidays can be challenging so start with these ideas and see if you can build from there. As your School, we are always here to support you and we encourage you to come to us with questions or concerns you may have on this topic.