# Tips for technology with 3-5 year olds

What do I need to know about using technology?
Technology, the internet and digital devices are now part of everyday life. As a parent, you might be worried about your young child's technology usage and looking at the news it feels like there is always conflicting advice about what is best for children when using technology.

Is my child too young?

The World Health Organisation has just announced their recommendations for screen time.
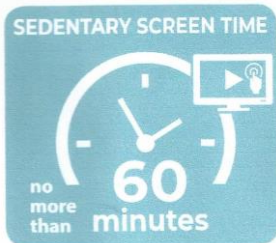
Sedentary screen time should be no more than one hour a day, less is better.

Some studies suggest that excessive screen-time (e.g. more than 1-2 hours a day, including television) is linked to attention problems, sleep and eating disorders and obesity.

Current research around technology and young children recommends a few key things that experts agree on:

- You are still the best person for your child to learn from. Technology will work best when you and your child play together using it, just like a book. Your child still needs to see and hear you explaining and doing things so they can understand how to do it themselves.
- Everything is about balance. Make sure that time your child spends playing with technology is also balanced with other activities, like playing outside or playing 'offline' games together.
- When you and your child are playing with technology, make sure you connect it to other things your child is learning. For example, if you enjoy baking together see if there are any games or online recipes you can find together.

You may want to start introducing behaviour management techniques, like giving your child a timer to count down how long they have left to use a device, to make sure there are no tantrums when it is taken away.

As children get older they begin to learn that devices hold information and they will begin to use it to concentrate for longer periods and carry out more complicated games or instructions. For example, they may now be able to listen to a whole story, may start to try and read, or begin to type their name and other words in to devices.

What should I avoid?
Always avoid any technology that is violent or that reinforces any negative stereotypes.

Remember the saying, 'do as I say, not as I do?' Your child will want to copy anything you are doing, so if you are always using technology they will want to be too!

So, what can I do with my child?
Look out for technology that can support your 3-5 year-old to:

- Play more complex games and follow rules
- Listen to and repeat longer stories, songs & rhymes
- Share with others
- Make up their own stories or games
- Link sounds to letters, eventually helping them to read
- Begin to write letters, words and short sentences.

Skype and other video messaging services can provide great opportunities for your child to develop their listening and attention and speaking skills.

It is important to try and make sure you are around to help your child understand what is going on when they are using technology.

<u>Other useful resources</u>

- The app guide http://literacyapps.literacytrust.org.uk/ can help you choose age-appropriate apps for your 3-5 year-old to help them learn language and communication skills.
- What tv programmes should they watch?
  http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/parents-guide-to-television
- The CBBC website is also useful for more information about toddlers and tablets.