

LESS SCREEN TIME = MORE TIME FOR CREATIVE & ACTIVE PLAY TIME = MORE FUN, MORE LEARNING & BETTER HEALTH

*“My children get along so much better [during Screen-Free Week].
They don’t fight as much. They practice their piano more. They read.
But mostly, I notice the imaginative play.”*

– ANNE PURCELL, MINOT, ND IN THE MINOT DAILY NEWS

Children need to play

Play is so essential to children’s health and well-being—and so endangered—that the United Nations lists it as a guaranteed right in its Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of the most important reasons to limit children’s screen time is to ensure that they have more time and opportunities for hands-on creative play.¹

Children play creatively to:

- **have fun.**
- **express their fantasies and feelings.**
- **gain a sense of competence.**
- **make meaning of their experience.**²

Hands-on, creative play promotes:

- **intellectual growth.**
- **critical thinking.**
- **constructive problem solving skills through opportunities to explore and experiment.**³
- **self-control.**⁴

As the amount of time children spend with screens is increasing, the amount of time children spend in hands-on creative play is decreasing.⁵ Also, the more time young children spend with screens, the more time they are likely to spend engaging with

them as older children⁶ and the harder time they have turning screens off.⁷ In addition to the time it takes up, screen media is less conducive to creative play than other media such as books or radio.⁸

The best selling toys, marketed on TV and the Internet, often inhibit rather than promote creativity, because they are either linked to media programs, embedded with computer chips, or both. When children play with toys that are based on media products, they play less creatively because they are not spurred to make up their own world.⁹ And toys that talk, chirp, beep, and move electronically mean that a child’s involvement is often limited to pushing a button—hardly a creative activity!

Active play is important, too

According to the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, “Kids need at least 60 minutes of active and vigorous play each day, and one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to meet this goal is by playing outside.”¹⁰ Given that childhood obesity is a major public health concern, the amount of sedentary time that children spend with screens is a big problem. Children ages 10 to 16 now spend, on average, only 12.6 minutes per day in vigorous physical activity, yet they spend an average of 10.4 waking hours each day relatively motionless.¹¹ In addition, young children living in inner cities are failing to develop essential

1. Why Screen-Free Week?

large motor skills. One recent study found that 86% of disadvantaged preschoolers in two cities lacked basic motor skills like running, jumping, throwing, and catching.¹² While proponents of screen technology laud gaming systems like the Wii which promote movement, a recent study suggests that simulating activities by playing on a Wii does not burn as many calories as actually engaging in those activities.¹³

Screen-Free Week is a chance for children and families to experience the joys of play:

Play with art supplies

Play with words

Play with music

Make up songs

Play with blocks

Play with nothing

Play cards and board games

Play indoors

Play outdoors

Play tag

Play sports

Play together

Play alone

And when Screen-Free Week is over...keep on playing!

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