

Guide to encourage positive screen time





Dear parents,

With the successive arrival of the internet, mobile phones and tablets, we're continuing to experience new revolutions. We use this technology to work, learn, organise our time, stay in touch with loved ones, follow driving directions... So many new habits have transformed our everyday lives... in a good way!

It is therefore natural that screens have entered our homes, taking up our time and attention as well as our children's who have of course followed suit.

The digital native generation has appropriated these new tools, learning to use them with ease, and readily identifying the possibilities they offer at a somewhat alarming pace. But this incredibly fast change comes with consequences, and we are now realising that these tools offer great power, but also great responsibilities. Our own screen time, as well as children's and teenagers', must be supervised and balanced to ensure it remains a source of enrichment.

So, how can you keep everyone happy? What rules should you establish and how can you discuss this as a family? What practices should you adopt to help your children use their screens responsibly? In practical terms, how can you ensure that screens help to bring your family together rather than creating a generational gap?

To answer all these questions, Orange has created this guideline based on the latest advice from trusted healthcare and child protection professionals and relevant authorities.

Now it's over to you...

We tend to think of screen time as the time our kids spend in front of the TV, but it isn't... it is the sum of the time spent on ALL devices with a screen...



Screen time, for each age group

Here are the recommendations* agreed by most child protection and healthcare professionals:

Under 3 years old, no screens

From 3 to 6 years

🕒 No more than 20 mins/session

Maximum 1 hour/day in total

- not during meals, less than an hour before going to bed and never in their bedroom
- always accompanied by an adult to guide them

From 7 to 9 years

🕒 No more than 30 mins/session

Maximum 2 hours/day in total

- not during meals, less than an hour before going to bed and never in their bedroom
- use parental controls to configure the times and websites they access
- an adult nearby to guide and keep an eye on initial uses

10 years and over

🕒 Around 30 mins/session

Time decided together and can be increased depending on their needs and maturity

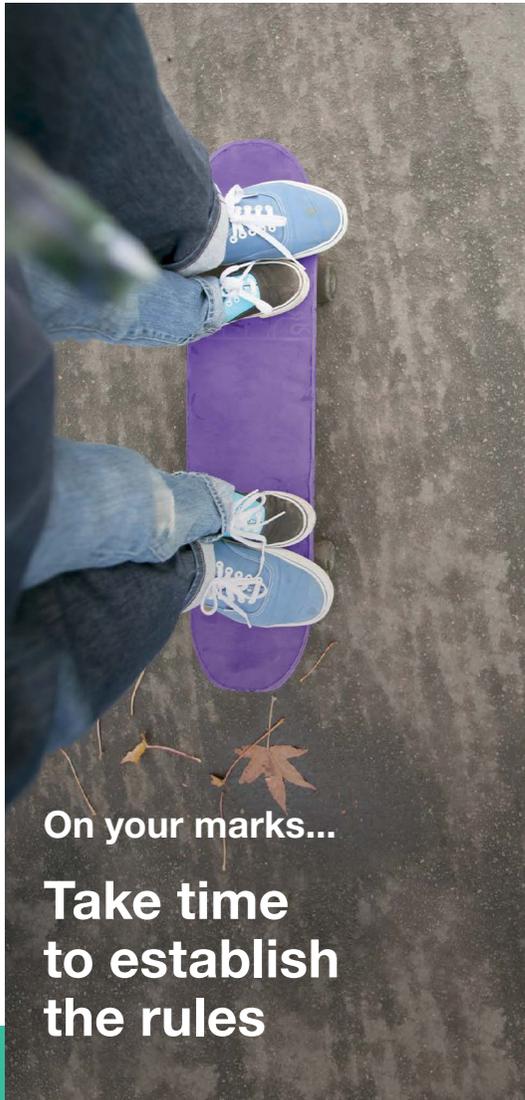
- not during meals, less than an hour before going to bed and never at night
- encourage them to take regular breaks, keep parental controls in place if necessary
- take an interest in what they do, and talk to them regularly about it

Be aware, excess screen time can affect:

- language acquisition among the youngest children
- sleep
- attention span, concentration, mood
- strained eyesight, near-sightedness
- addictive behaviour
- inactivity, obesity

* Sources: recommendations by ANSES (French health, safety and environment agency), WHO, the French Academy of Sciences, CSA (French Higher Audiovisual Council), healthcare professionals and associations for the protection of children on the internet.





On your marks...
Take time
to establish
the rules

Don't let yourself be wholly-consumed... by screens

You make sure that your children have a healthy and balanced diet and don't eat constantly outside mealtimes. Well, the same applies to screens.

It's all a question of balance. You have to find the right approach, suited to your family; and you will see, with the tips in this guide, everything will go swimmingly.



Screen time... with an "s"

Tablets, computers, TVs, mobiles, games consoles... it is the total time spent in front of these different screens that should be counted. To calculate a reasonable length of time for your child, take their age into account. The younger the child, the shorter this time should be. The best thing is to establish a weekly screen time limit, spread it over certain days of the week and set a maximum length of time per session.

Hang in there! Once everything is agreed, you'll find it much easier.

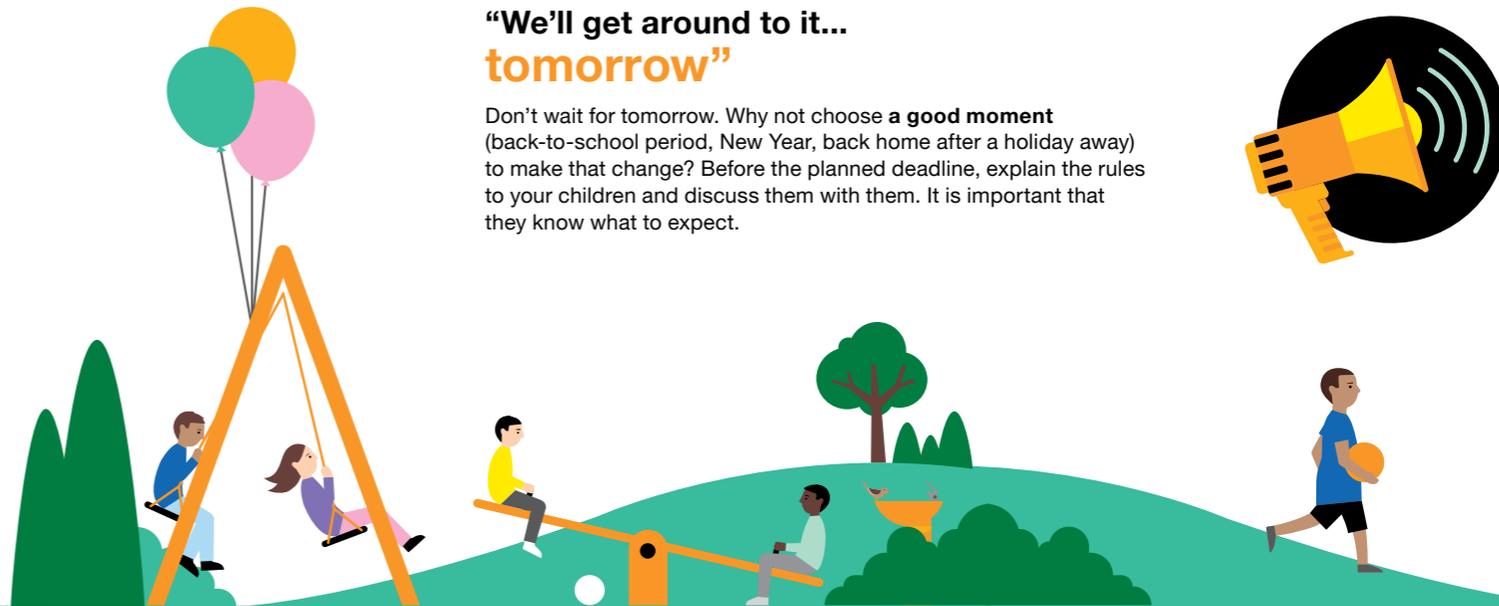
Simple rules shared with everyone

Your ex-partner who has shared custody, their nanny, their grandparents... it is important to discuss the new rules with everyone.

And then com-mu-ni-cate. Do Gran and Grandad let them watch a cartoon on Wednesday afternoon? No problem, **that time can be deducted from the overall weekly time allowance.**

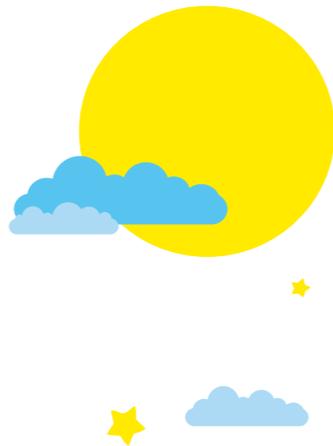
"We'll get around to it... tomorrow"

Don't wait for tomorrow. Why not choose a **good moment** (back-to-school period, New Year, back home after a holiday away) to make that change? Before the planned deadline, explain the rules to your children and discuss them with them. It is important that they know what to expect.





A family affair
**Communication
is vital**



Together, it's even more fun

Screen time can also be a family activity. Spend some quality time together (watching a film on a late Saturday afternoon, joining a car race on a console...). During these sessions you will chat, talk about what you've just watched and bicker... but what's sure is that you are together and will cherish these memories in the future.

“You first, you're always on your phone...”

If you want it to work, you have to set an example. How can we moderate our children's screen time if we can't put our phone down? For example, when you get home in the evening you can leave your phone in a basket in the entrance hall, put it on silent, and avoid using it during family times like meals.

And you will see your children modelling their behaviour on yours.

Why is he allowed to and I'm not?

“Because he's older than you, sweetie.”

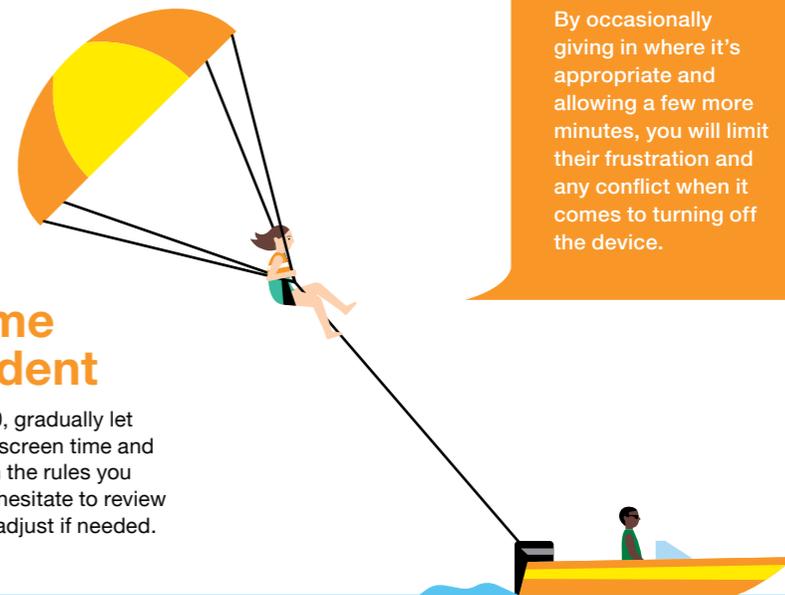
Ah yes, if you have siblings all addicted to screens, it's a bit trickier, but never fear, it is manageable. Apply the same rules as you would at the cinema. A 6-year-old can't watch the same films as a teenager but there are short programmes that are suited to their age. Explain and justify the differences using their age, the content and the labelling.

For screens it's the same: depending on their age, they can't do the same things and they can't spend as much time doing them as their older siblings.

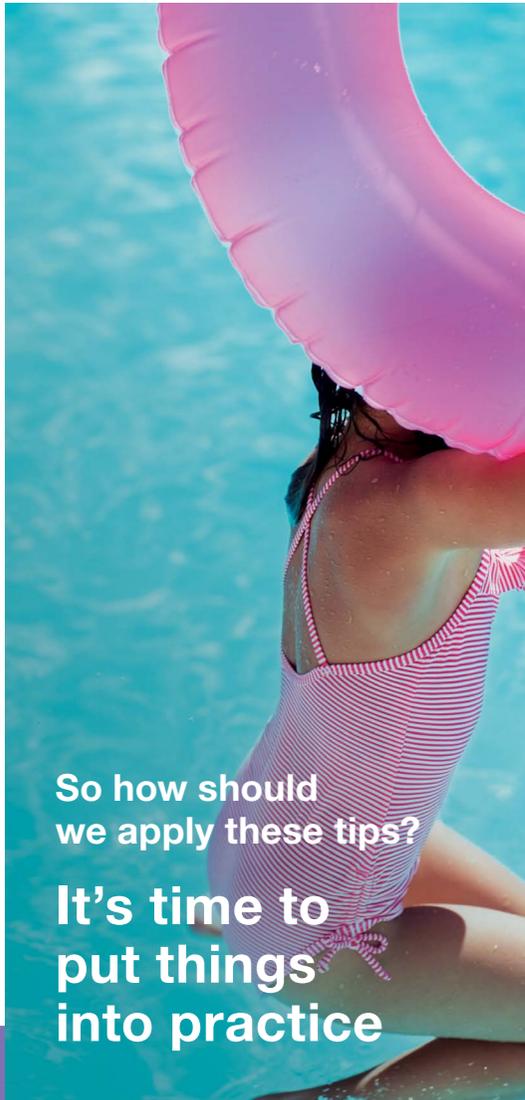


Guide them to become independent

For children over 10, gradually let them manage their screen time and schedule, based on the rules you set together. Don't hesitate to review this with them and adjust if needed.



Let's face it, they will always try to negotiate...
If your child tells you they just need two more minutes to finish their game and move on to the next level... listen to them.
By occasionally giving in where it's appropriate and allowing a few more minutes, you will limit their frustration and any conflict when it comes to turning off the device.



So how should we apply these tips?

It's time to put things into practice

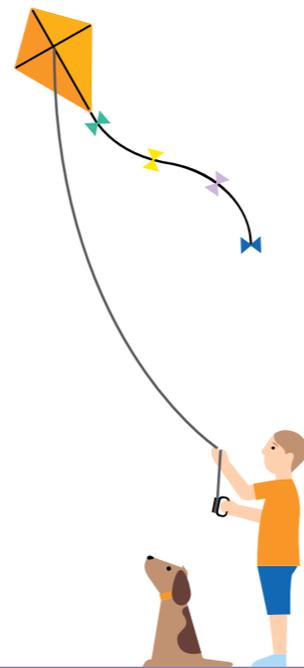
The clearer and the simpler the rules are, the easier they are to follow

Have you considered all the parameters; and laid down the rules? Now all they have to do... is follow them. Generally, there's nothing better than repetition: tell your child how much screen time they are allowed and repeat that like a mantra if needed: twenty minutes... twenty minutes... With younger children, show them the clock: when the big hand is on the two it's time to stop, OK? All psychologists say the same thing: for a child or a teenager, consistency is essential. Stick to it, your children will thank you.

Stop using bribery

By using screen time to reward your children, you run the risk of making screens even more important to them and creating a real source of dispute.

Conversely, if used well, screens can foster richer discussions at home: debates on topics they saw or read about, a moment of fun time spent in each other's company...



Let's talk about devices

As you may have realised, the more different devices you have in your household, the more screen time you have to control. In some families, each child has their own device, chosen according to their age (a tablet for one, a console for another, access to the PC for the third), in others there is a single family tablet that everyone shares. We recommend installing parental controls for the youngest children on all the screens and for their first mobile phones **opt for a capped plan or one suited** to the desired use, while keeping a watchful eye on what they're up to. And to avoid any nasty surprises, disable micro transactions in games apps, for ringtones and online music...

No screens at bed time

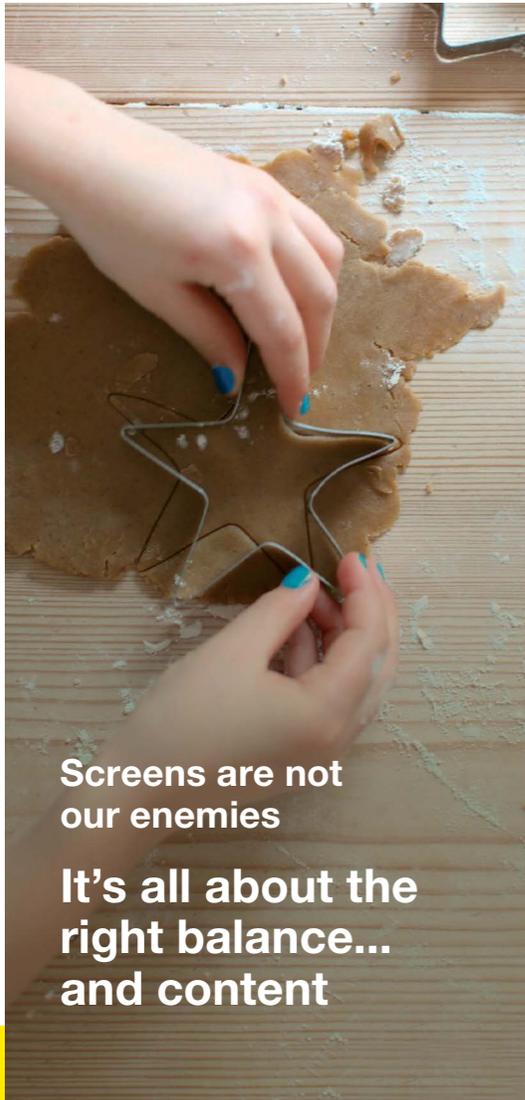
On the subject of devices, you should know that by banning screens in the bedroom, especially at night, you've already **solved 80% of the problem**. Ask your teenager to leave their smartphone to charge overnight in a room other than their bedroom. Do they complain because the moment before bedtime is their favourite time to send messages? Explain why you believe in this rule (protecting their sleep and ultimately their health), reassure them (it can wait until tomorrow) and remain firm: your teenager can blame their radio silence on their horrible parent!

What if we planned a virtual play date?

Help your children to understand that real-life friends are always better than the virtual friends you meet in a game or on social media. What's more, that incessant chat with Theo can be more fun if they meet up and actually do something together. It is important that the time spent in front of screens doesn't encroach on their time for reading, leisure activities with friends or on family time...

Always have an idea up your sleeve to keep them occupied, by themselves, as a family, at home or outside...





Screens are not
our enemies

It's all about the
right balance...
and content

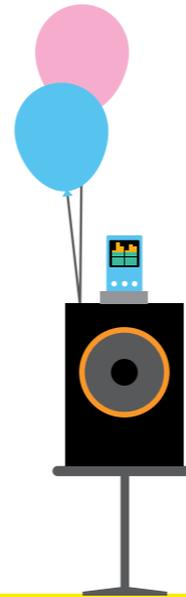
Parents 4.0, that's you

Now that the rules have been set and put (almost...) perfectly into practice: do you know what your children are actually doing on their screens? Does this seem like a stupid question? Not necessarily. Lots of parents feel overwhelmed by their children's digital usage, whilst others stay out of it altogether, seeing it as "their private world". It would be a shame to cut yourself off from how your children use their screens, without being intrusive. Sit down next to them and take an interest: you will probably learn a lot about them and their generation.

They also have to feel that they can come to you if they are worried or upset by something or someone in one of their games or on social media.

From fun to educational fun

Drawing, watching a documentary, learning to code, discovering a foreign language, reading interactive books, science tutorials... what your children do on screens should not be limited to passively watching or playing addictive games. Depending on their interests and their age, **encourage them to try on-screen activities that have added value.** For younger children, select the most suitable activities for them.



Great little tools for parents

As a good starting point: set times when Wi-fi is available in the house.

Don't hesitate to plan periods with or without Wi-fi. To do this, use the settings provided by operators and manufacturers depending on the equipment. To take it a stage further, **install parental controls on all devices.** This will enable your little geeks to surf in complete safety.

To understand and find digital protection solutions for your children in French, go to corporate.orange.be/en/social-responsibility



Parents of teenagers, this goes out to you

Remember that it is important to support them by empowering them in their digital uses, talk to them regularly about what they do, see and post, and warn them to be careful, especially when it comes to **confidentiality settings**, and everything related to **protecting their privacy and digital identity**... everything online leaves a trace.

Just as you would teach them not to talk to strangers in the street, you should encourage them not to post any information that could be used to locate them, and advise them not to accept anyone and everyone as a "friend". Talk to them about the hugely important notion of privacy. And, once again, **always be ready to lend an ear in the event of any issues** (teasing, photoshopped pictures...) that can be very psychologically harmful.

If necessary, get information or help from specialists by calling for example **Child Focus on the number 116000 (24/24, 7/7).**

To summarise:

10 tips

for managing screens more easily in your family

1. Adapt screen time according to age.
2. Tell children beforehand how long they can use the screen. For example: “2 episodes of your cartoon, no more!”
3. Set the rules and limits according to the needs of each sibling and explain them clearly to avoid negotiations.
4. Choose content with them based on their age and the actual needs.
5. Encourage regular breaks from screens and set an example.
6. Ban screens in the bedroom, at night and during meals.
7. Share these rules collectively and stick to them.
8. Make sure screens don't become an obsession or exclusive activity to the detriment of all others. Make yourself available and suggest other ways to have fun together.
9. Warn children and teenagers about the potential risks of the internet and social media. Remain attentive and listen to them.
10. Empower them by gradually increasing their independence, whilst still keeping an eye on them.

So, to sum up this inexhaustible subject... no two families are the same, so the most important thing is to be patient and caring, listen and use your common sense. Trust yourself!

To find out more...

corporate.orange.be/en/social-responsibility

Explore more advice and tips from Orange to guide your child through the digital world and use technology safely and responsibly.



corporate.orange.be/en/social-responsibility