

# Screen Time: How Much Is Too Much?

15  
minutes

What You'll Need: [Video](#) • [Student Handout](#)

## Activity Steps

1. **Ask:** *How many hours a day of screen time do you think is unhealthy? How much is too much?*

Invite students to share their guesses. Follow up with students by asking them to explain why and to identify the negative effects of too much screen time.

2. **Say:** *Determining an unhealthy amount of screen time is actually a complicated issue. We can't just consider the total amount of time each day; we also have to consider how exactly we're spending our screen time to get a better understanding of its impact. We're going to watch a short video that takes a deeper dive into this question. As you watch the video, think about how screen time can be considered good or bad for our physical or emotional health.*
3. **Show** the video [Screen Time: How Much Is Too Much?](#), by KQED Education (5:20 minutes).
4. **Say:** *One key takeaway from the video is that the term "screen time" is too general. It's more useful to look at how long and how often we're using screen time and consider whether we're using it **actively** or **passively**.*
  - **Active use** is contributing content through posts, comments, or any other form of online communication and expression.
  - **Passive use** is scrolling through online content without reacting to it.
5. **Say:** *Today we're going to reflect on our own technology use and identify ways to be more in control of our screen time and habits.*
6. **Say:** *Think of two digital habits in your life that are active and two that are passive. For each one, draw an emoji or write one word to describe how it makes you feel.*

**Distribute** the [Student Handout](#) and have students complete Question 1.

Answers will vary.

**Say:** *Research about screen time and health isn't conclusive but passive screen time may be more strongly linked to negative well-being, and active screen time is linked to positive effects, like connecting with others and finding your "tribe."*



MEDIA BALANCE & WELL-BEING

We find balance  
in our digital lives.

Adapted from <https://commonsense.com/education>.

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7. **Say:** *As they mentioned in the video, the research about screen time and health isn't conclusive but may suggest:*
- *Screen time right before bed and heavy screen use throughout the day can lead to sleep problems.*
  - *The "feedback loops" of screen time can have addictive qualities.*
8. **Say:** *In thinking more about your digital habits and how they make you feel, what is one habit you may want to change or try to do differently? Why is it important to you to change this habit?*

Direct students to complete Question 2 on the handout.

9. **Say:** *Now that you've identified a digital habit that you would like to change, make a plan for how you would like to change your habit. Consider when you will do something different and what you can do instead.*

Direct students to complete Question 3 on the handout.

Answers will vary. Examples of media challenges include:

- Unfollowing certain accounts
- Setting time limits per day or by app
- Using a media habits tracking app, like Moment or ZenScreen
- Setting device-free moments in the day, such as during dinner or homework
- Charging my phone outside of my room at night



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