



Media Use in the Family's Everyday Life

Advice for parents

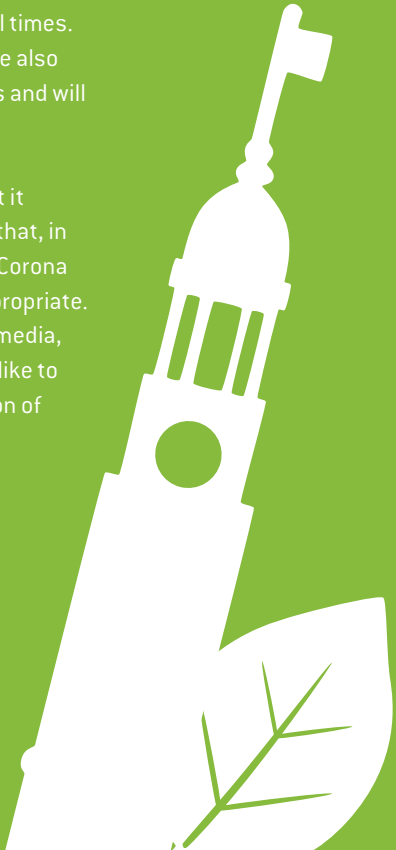


Dear parents,

In everyday family life, you often have to cope with a number of challenges at the same time. This can sometimes lead to stressful situations. Perhaps you occasionally wonder which media can be educational or enriching for your children? In both cases, you might feel conflicted or uncertain about offering your children digital media like mobile phones, tablets, televisions or computers.

The Elbkinder have addressed precisely these issues as part of the federal program "Entry to daycare: Building bridges in early education" ("Kita-Einstieg: Brücken bauen in frühe Bildung") during the coronavirus pandemic. The project supports families who are starting daycare and offers low-threshold services. In recent months, we had to find new ways to stay in touch with families. During the coronavirus pandemic, we were often not able to be together like in normal times. The digital route has created new opportunities for us. We have also found that digital media have grown in importance for families and will probably continue to do so.

It is generally not harmful for children to use digital media, but it depends on 'What?' and 'How often?'. It may also be the case that, in exceptional circumstances, the use of media (e. g. during the Corona lockdown) exceeds what you as a family normally think is appropriate. This is temporarily fine. When it comes to children and digital media, there are a few things to consider. For this purpose, we would like to provide you with some useful tips and then a suitable selection of content.





Which media is okay for children?



What matters is not the type of medium, but the content and how you handle it:

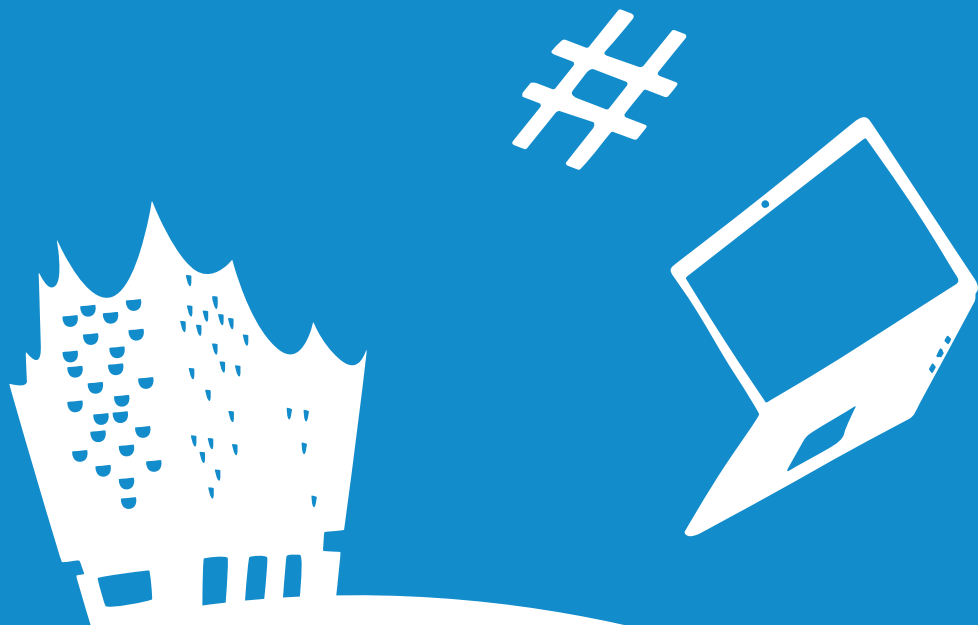
Digital media is omnipresent today and part of everyday family life. We often regard computers, tablets or smartphones as devices for work or play. They can also be used very creatively, and provide valuable opportunities for discussion, for instance, looking at holiday photos on a smartphone with your children and enthusiastically telling each other about your experiences.

It is quite normal and also not harmful that your children today use different media than you did at their age:

Sometimes technical changes happen so quickly that it leaves us feeling unsure. And

that, too, is completely normal. But it's not a problem for your children because they have obviously grown up with these things. What is new, however, is that your children are growing up with unlimited media content that is available at all times. While you might have waited for the *Sandmännchen* full of anticipation, today you and your children can use streaming services, on-demand TV and apps like YouTube at the touch of a button. As a parent or guardian, you therefore have an increased responsibility to help your children navigate a vast range of options and to provide guidance as to what is good for them and what is not. That's why it is important to know what your children are playing or watching. This is particularly true when it comes to the internet.

How much media use is okay for children? When does it become unhealthy?



It's not just about setting a specific time frame, but the children's activities:

As with all activities, the question of how long depends on what your child is doing with digital media and what the purpose is. For example, if your children are excitedly telling their grandparents about their day in a video call on a tablet, it's fine for them to use the device until the conversation is over. If you're watching a film with your children, then the film's length is the appropriate duration. It is best to make clear and transparent arrangements right from the start about what your children can do with digital media and for how long. Children can generally decide themselves when they need a change of scenery and want to move around. One exception to this are games that do not have a logical end and are designed to be played on and on. You should set your own time limit for these games. It is generally recommended that younger children should have less screen time. You can find screen time recommendations on the website of the Federal Centre for Health Education.

It always becomes unhealthy when you leave your children alone with their [negative] experiences:

Sometimes children are agitated by things that we are not consciously aware of as adults

or that seem unproblematic to us at first glance. Some children may be unable to bear the exciting music in films. Other children may identify with the heroes in their series, films or games so much that they are extremely upset when they suffer injustices. Pay careful attention to your children and take their worries and fears seriously.

Talk to your children about what they have experienced:

Even if your children don't express any concerns, it is important to talk to them about what they've experienced. For example, while you're having dinner, ask your children what happened in their computer game or how their favourite TV hero got on today. You will learn a lot about your child's emotional world, their perceptions and what they like. Your children will also feel accepted by you and that they are being taken seriously, as these heroes and stories are important to them.



Which media content is okay for children?

Rely on your children's creativity and their urge to explore:

Give your children the opportunity to be creative with a smartphone, PC or tablet. Taking photos or making videos is probably the easiest way to be creative. Experience the world from your children's point of view with a photo safari. You'll be amazed at your children's photos. Your children can use *Paint* or edit family photos. What do your children sound like as adults? What does dad sound like as a woman? Your children can find out by recording voices and modifying them using a voice changer. Dream the dream of being a popstar with your kids. With apps like *Garageband* and *Auxy*, your children have an entire recording studio available for making music. If you want, and your child is a bit older,

it's easy to shoot an animated film using the *Stop Motion* app or you can create little games using *Scratch*, the programming language for kids.

If your children grow up multilingual, they can also use the internet to stay in touch with the family's language of origin. If German is not their first language, there are opportunities to get to know the new language. For example, the website *AMIRA* has plenty of short stories that children can listen to or read in eight languages. Take the opportunity to explore this and similar options with your children. The best way for children to learn a language is by talking to other people. It would therefore not be helpful for your children to only watch videos or listen to stories in an unfamiliar language.

Use digital media as a way for your children to keep in touch with friends and family:

Your children might miss relatives who live far away or friends who have moved house. You can let your children use digital media to send drawings to grandpa, to show grandma the lightning-fast vehicle that they spent half a day building or to show a friend the secret treasure they found in the park.

Do not let children of daycare and elementary school age surf the Internet alone:

Your children may be quick in getting to grips with digital media technology. But left alone, they'll just as quickly be overwhelmed by the pitfalls of the internet. You can talk to primary school children about the fact that there are films and photos on the internet that are not suitable for them, that not everything on the internet is true, that it can cost money if they click somewhere on an unknown site and that they should always think carefully before posting photos or revealing

information about themselves. However, to learn how to competently deal with all of these risks, children must be older and will need supervision as they gain experience over a longer period of time. We therefore highly recommend that you do not let children of nursery and primary school age surf the internet unsupervised.

Use existing security settings and check in advance exactly what your child is allowed to use alone:

Use the 'Guided Access' (for iOS) or 'Pin a screen' (for Android) function on your tablet or smartphone. This allows you to restrict your device to a single app for your children or switch on Airplane Mode.

By visiting the homepage of the German Youth Institute e. V. (DJJI) or the initiative 'Gutes Aufwachsen mit Medien', you can find out which apps are recommended for children their age.





What else should you pay attention to?

Create compensatory time for physical activity:

Your children will show you what they need: What children want most is to go out and play with their friends. Toys and material things, including TV and digital media, only come in third place. Bear this in mind and think about where your child might be able to exercise indoors and outdoors. Perhaps you might also need some exercise? Do some gymnastics with your child, play (foot)ball or go for a walk to the nearest construction site.

Give your children attention in between while they are playing:

Watch your kids play for 10–15 minutes and tell them what you see. You can sit back and

relax while doing so. Your children will enjoy the attention and feel happier playing on their own afterwards. And it can also be a nice idea to sit with your kids and find out what creative play ideas they have.

Don't use media as a reward. And don't ban media as punishment either:

If there are conflicts or disagreements, these might have other causes that have nothing to do with the use of media. It can be more helpful to show your child that it is perfectly normal to be angry, sad or in a bad mood from time to time. Maybe you can find something to lift the mood.

Online advice

Related links

www.klicksafe.de
www.schau-hin.info
www.internet-abc.de/eltern/die-juengsten-im-netz/kleinkinder-und-medien/
www.gutes-aufwachsen-mit-medien.de
www.kindergesundheit-info.de/themen/medien/mediennutzung/

Children's websites and search engines

www.fragfinn.de
www.blinde-kuh.de
www.klicksafe.de/fuer-kinder/
www.seitenstark.de

Apps and content

www.gutes-aufwachsen-mit-medien.de/informieren/datenbank-fuer-kindermedien
scratch.mit.edu/parents
www.amira-lesen.de



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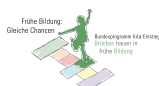
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