



PricelessSM
Parenting

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Priceless Parenting Newsletter June 2009

Dear Parents,

Most children love their digital entertainment: watching TV and movies, playing video games, surfing the internet and texting on their cellphones. As parents we often enjoy these same activities which can make it more difficult to set limits for our children (do what I say, not what I do!). This month we look at determining where to set healthy limits for our children around media consumption.

I welcome [hearing your thoughts](#) on this important topic.

Warm Regards,

Kathy Slattengren

P.S. I hope you enjoy this newsletter. Please do me a favor and forward this to a friend who also may enjoy reading it.



How much media is too much?

When parents discuss how much media they allow their children, the answers vary wildly. Some parents have very strict time restrictions on their children's media viewing while others give their children more control over the time they spend on media.

How do you know when your child is getting too much media?

One mom knew she needed to allow less video game time when her 7-year-old son started not wanting play outside or do things with the family preferring his video game instead. He was so attached to playing his video game that he often pitched a fit when he was told the game had to go off. His games didn't have a good way to save the game for later so he was reluctant to stop playing and lose his place in the game.

She decided to reduce his video game playing to one hour twice a week. She started giving him a 10 minute warning before his hour was up. When the 10 minutes were up, he could either choose to shut the game off or she would turn the power off. It only took a couple times of turning the power off to get him to shut the game down in time.

What are signs that digital usage is becoming a problem?

If your children are exhibiting these types of behaviors, it's time to think about reducing the time they spend on media:

- Spending less and less time with family and friends
- Difficulty focusing on the present moment due to craving video game or cellphone

Setting Limits

You can learn more about setting and enforcing limits in the Priceless Parenting online [parenting class](#).

The "[Parenting the Digital Child: Setting Limits and Teaching Responsibility in a Connected World](#)" presentation also provides a deeper exploration of these issues.

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[Video Games & Your Kids](#)

explores video game addiction along with recommendations on setting

- Developing health issues such as Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, eye strain, weight gain, backaches
- Withdrawing from sports, hobbies and social interactions
- Losing sleep due to gaming, texting
- Acting irritable or discontent when not using digital items
- Declining grades in school, missing school
- Talking and thinking obsessively about the digital activity
- Denying or minimizing any negative consequences

media limits for different ages.

If you feel your child is addicted to video games and will react extremely to having limits set, it is wise to seek help from a professional counselor or psychologist.

What do the experts recommend?

Hilarie Cash, psychotherapist and co-author of [Video Games & Your Kids](#), makes the following recommendations for personal screen time (computer, TV, video games). This time does not include computer time needed for homework.

- Under 2-years-old: no screen time
- Preschool: 1 - 2 hours/day
- Elementary: 2 hours/day
- Junior High: 3 hours/day
- High School: 4 hours/day

She also recommends no TV, internet or gaming consoles in children's rooms. The primary problem with having these devices in children's bedrooms is that parents have more difficulty monitoring what's going on.

Won't it be difficult to set limits?

It can be very hard to set limits around digital entertainment. These digital devices keep our children content while we benefit from some free time. However, when we realize our children's media usage is having a negative impact on them, we need to set some limits despite our children's protesting.

With older children, it can help to explain why we're concerned about the time they're spending on digital entertainment. Engaging them in deciding what reasonable limits should be set may help them in sticking to those limits.

We may also need to change our own behavior so that we are modeling reasonable digital media usage. While this won't be easy, it will provide the time to try other activities. Perhaps this will be the summer your family discovers how much fun it is to go biking together!

This Month's Challenge: Limiting Media

Start by monitoring how much time your children currently spend each day with media. If you are concerned about the amount of time being spent on media, discuss your concerns with your children and decide on the limits that seem appropriate for your family. Determine the consequences for exceeding the limits.

Last Month's Challenge: Learning a New Skill

Last month you were challenged to think about the new skills your children are ready to take on this summer. Did you work with your kids to come up with a plan for learning at least one of these new skills? How did it go?

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