



ALL AGES

How Much Screen Time Should You Let Your Kids Have on Vacation?



BY JUDY KOUTSKY ▾

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Screen time on vacation is a hot topic amongst parents. As much as I love the idea of no screen time, I also know my two-high energy boys are prone to fighting—especially after a long day—and sometimes the only way I can actually get to relax (it's my vacation, too), is by giving each child their [iPad](#) (with [headphones](#)). Plus, it's a good way for them to unwind after a long day of snorkeling, skiing, hiking, biking or whatever that day's activity was. We talked to a few experts and other parents to see how to best handle screen time on vacation.

1. Set boundaries ahead of time.

Talk to the kids about when and for how long screen time will be acceptable on vacation—for everyone in the family (you included). Discussing and establishing this rule ahead of time will help everyone to appreciate the act of disconnecting from technology while on vacation, as well as the value of spending quality time with family.

2. Track your screen time.

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[Kevon Owen](#), a Clinical Psychotherapist who works with children and adolescents (and their parents), encourages parents to avoid the temptation to just hand over a screen anytime kids seem bored or in need of a distraction. “Handing over a screen in a restaurant to keep them quiet is not teaching them how to be in those settings—it’s avoiding teaching them,” he says. “Car rides can be a good time for some screen time, but be aware how quickly 30 minutes can turn into three hours.” Set a timer to ensure the kids—and you—aren’t spending too much time on your [smartphones](#) and [video game consoles](#).

3. Designate screen time during down time.

“We have three little girls—ages 6, 4, and 1—and when we go on a family vacation, we actually allow and tolerate more screen time than we would if we were at home,” says Jeff Neal, owner of [The Critter Depot](#). “The biggest reason for this is because it helps keep the kids calm. We’re all in an unfamiliar place. My wife and I have an easier time adapting than the kids. So to keep mornings and night time easier on everyone, we allow a little more screen time than normal. We’re still going to the beach and out to eat and shopping, but there’s no screen time during those excursions.”

4. Book vacations with limited or no Wi-Fi.

[Amy Carney](#), author of *A Courageous Approach to Raising Children in A Complicated World*, purposely books vacations to locations where there will be limited or no Wi-Fi available so the kids are unable to spend too much time on their devices. “Oh, darn. There’s no Wi-Fi signal? Guess you’re going to have to find something else to do!”

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