

New Voicemail

Subscribe

10 friends like your photo

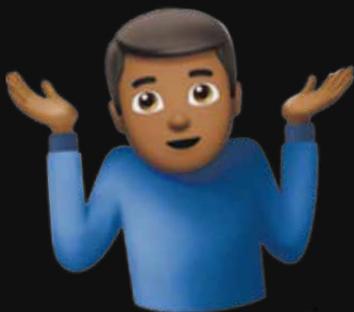
16

Re

5

# Are Screens Running Your Life?

If you find it hard to put down your digital devices, you're not alone.



At school, 11-year-old Oscar Korson takes tests on a Chromebook. He turns in assignments on it too. When he gets home, the sixth-grader watches basketball highlights on his iPad. After he finishes his homework, Oscar plays on his Xbox or watches Netflix with his family.

"I can't imagine life without screens," he says.

Oscar says he spends about five hours on screens each weekday. He spends about seven hours a day on weekends.

Those numbers may not surprise you. Kids ages 8 to 12 use screens for six hours a day on average. Many experts, parents, and teachers think that's **excessive**. They worry that screens are taking over kids' lives. Just how much screen time is really too much?

## Connecting Us

There's no escaping screens. Most of us probably wouldn't want to anyway. It's fun to play video games and laugh at cat

### WORDS TO KNOW

**excessive** *adjective*. more than is necessary, usual, or normal

**moderation** *noun*. the act of doing something within reasonable limits



1 Missed Call



Text

Bonus Points, Download Now

memes. And we use apps to order food or get directions.

But mostly, screens have the power to connect people. They allow us to instantly talk to a friend across town. Or we can talk to a relative on the other side of the world.

### It Adds Up

Screen time can go from good to bad quickly, though. Let's say you're doing online research for a school project. While you're working, your friend shares a YouTube video with you. You watch it. Then you share it. Then another friend texts you with a different video. You try to get back to your work. But where did you leave off?

"You can't get into anything very deeply if you're studying in three- to five-minute bursts," says Larry Rosen. He studies the effects of screens on kids.

Some studies have shown a link between heavy screen use and lower test scores. Too much screen time can also affect your health. More screen time means less time exercising. Plus, scientists have found that the

light from screens can make it difficult to fall asleep.

### Finding a Balance

So what's the right amount of daily screen time? There's no easy answer. Some experts say two hours per day is enough. Others suggest spending no more than one-third of your free time on screens.

But Rosen and others say **moderation** is the best strategy. It's OK to use screens. You just need to balance screen time

with time spent doing other things.

Take Oscar, for example. He plays the drums and basketball. He puts away his iPad while doing his homework. Oscar also makes sure to spend time with friends and

family in real life. Still, he sometimes needs to be reminded to power down.

"If I'm in the screen zone, I just want to keep clicking," he says.

That's when his parents tell him to take a screen break.

"I'm not saying I like it," Oscar explains. "But I know they're right."

—by Jennifer Li Shotz

**1 in 4**  
kids say  
they watch  
online videos  
every day.

Source: Common Sense Media

## Be Your Own Screen Boss

You don't have to let screens take over your life! These tips will help you take charge of your devices.



**Set up screen-free zones.** Your bedroom and the dinner table are good places to start.



**Keep count.** Use apps that monitor screen use. Then challenge yourself to cut your screen use by half over the next week.



**Don't get distracted.** Turn off notifications.

All of these sounds, vibrations, and pop-ups can make it hard to focus.



**Watch the clock.** Shut down all screens at least an hour before bedtime.

