# 'Limiting Screen Time for the Under Fives Will Prolong Their Childhood'



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Technology is part of our world from a very early age. It opens up a world that, before the days of the internet and smartphones, was a mystery to us. It gives us access to knowledge at our fingertips.



It is easy, therefore, not only to surrender to it ourselves, but also to give in to our children's demands for it.
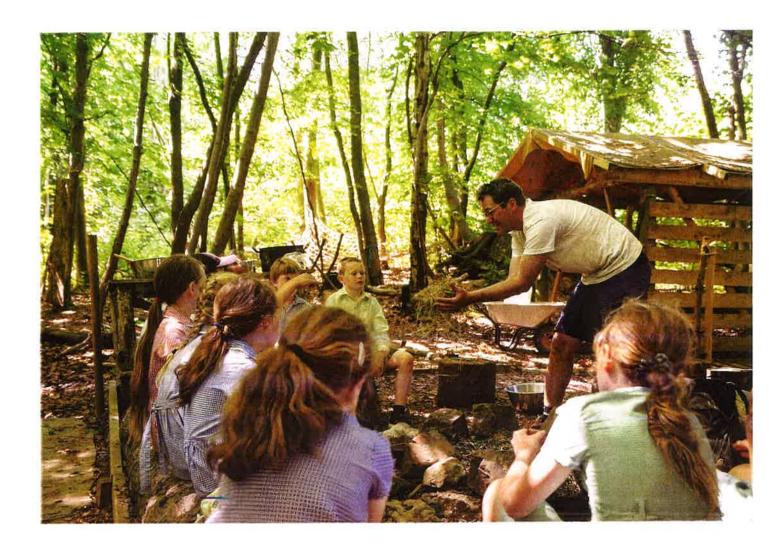
But should we? A recent study published in JAMA Pediatrics has found that most under-fives are spending too long in front of the television or on smartphones.

More than two thirds of those surveyed are spending longer than an hour a day looking at a screen. The World Health Organisation says that children below the age of two should not look at screens at all. The guidelines suggest those aged between two and four should be limited to just one hour per day.

Dr Sheri Madigan, one of the authors and a psychologist at Calgary University in Canada, said more than half of three to four-year-olds in the UK use the internet every week and a fifth have their own tablet. She agrees that the 'digital tipping point' for this age range is one hour a day. Young children using screens more often, when compared with one hour a day, show an increased likelihood of reported behavioural problems and poor developmental outcomes.

Technology is important for young people, particularly in an education setting, but it is about striking the right balance.

We take our responsibility around screen time, technology and social media very seriously. This is the world our children are going to grow up and live in. We are teaching children from a very young age about the benefits and pitfalls of technology.

We are investing in mobile technology for our classrooms. From September,

all of our senior pupils will have tablets with keyboards and we will have Apple TVs in the classrooms to aid with our education programme. But, we need to teach children to use these things responsibly. We still want them outside, getting muddy, discovering the real world and we are investing just as much time and effort in that side of the curriculum.

Our pupils who board with us have mobile phones, but they're not accessible during the day. We give them a certain amount of trust so they learn

to use them responsibly, but we want our children to keep their innocence.

**By supporting children in this way, we can keep children as children – we can prolong their childhood, while at the same time giving them the early skills they will need to enter into a world where technology will play an important role.**