



OKLAHOMA AUTISM NETWORK

The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

CREATING A ROAD OF POSSIBILITIES IN THE MIDDLE CHILDHOOD YEARS

BALANCING TECHNOLOGY WEBINAR WORKSHEET

About this Webinar:

Technology offers many advantages for children and youth with ASD and can be used as a tool to increase independence, including providing a means of communication for children who are nonverbal. However, too much technology can have a negative impact on a child's development and prevent meaningful engagement and development of skills necessary for a child to reach his or her full potential. Additionally, some parents and teachers also experience increased problem behavior related to use of technology.

Participants in this training will learn how technology impacts brain development, along with strategies for using technology to advance a child's independence and skills.

Purpose of this Worksheet:

This worksheet is a tool you can use during the webinar to take notes about how you can apply the information you learn. There is also a resource guide for parents and professionals to refer to when creating an intentional plan to work balanced electronic use.

The content included is general information and is not specific medical or behavioral advice. The information provided may not work for every child with autism or their family. We recommend working closely with your child's doctor(s), therapist(s), and/or educator to discuss how the ideas shared may be individualized to meet your child's needs. If you have an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

Balancing Technology

TECHNOLOGY & BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Below are current recommendations for healthy media use for children based on The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines. It is important to remember that with all age groups it is important to co-view media with your children and be a media mediator.

Age Range	Recommendations
2 and Under	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid media use except for video chat.
Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No more than one hour of high-quality programming per day
Grade School/ Teenagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't let media displace other important activities such as quality sleep, regular exercise, family meals, "unplugged" downtime.

Important Reminders about child development and technology use:

Children learn best:

- When engaged as active participants (Kuhl et al, 2003; Yurovsky et al, 2013)
- When experiences are developmentally appropriate (Bruner, 1983)
- Contexts meaningful to child (Kuhl, et al, 2003)
- When skills present a 'just right challenge' (eg: Lifter, et al 1993)
- When skills are presented within rich social interactions involving play with people and objects (Kuhl, 2007)

Children with autism and technology use:

- Often start using technology at a younger age (Slobodin, Heffler, & Davidovitch, 2019).
- More screen time than typical peers or other clinical groups (Slobodin, Heffler, & Davidovitch, 2019).
- More likely to watch adult television programs (Chonchaiya et al., 2011).
- Less likely to watch television with caregivers (Chonchaiya et al., 2011).

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BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY USE

When used properly, technology use can provide benefits to your child's development. For example, communication devices, academic apps and tools, self-management apps, and apps that help with social skills and awareness.

Teaching with Apps & Technology Tools

Area of Learning	Apps/ Tools Related to Area of Learning
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Voice Output Device through iPad or dedicated augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).• LAMP• Compass
Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Square Panda• ABC Mouse• www.adigitalkindergarten.com/p/my-favorite-apps-for-ipad.html• myHomework
Self-Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Habitica• Be Focused• Mood Panda• Breathe2Relax• Visual Schedule Planner• First Then Visual Schedule
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• iCreate Social Skills Stories• Noise Down• Autism Toolbox – Social Skills

The above list is an example of app options and is not a recommendation or endorsement for the above apps. Parents and professionals should assess each child's individual needs to determine which apps are most appropriate.

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WHEN TECHNOLOGY USE IS A PROBLEM

When reviewing how your child engages with technology you may find there are areas of improvement.

When assessing if technology is a problem, consider the following:

- Is technology the primary way your child occupies their “free” time? What other ways do they occupy their time when given a choice?
- Is technology the only or primary reinforcer used at school, home, or in therapy for your child?
- Is technology use contributing to problem behavior?
- Is your child staying up later and later to be on the computer or other technology?
- Does your child get fidgety, anxious, or angry if they don't have their device?
- Is the tech usage negatively impacting their schoolwork, family life, or other activities or interests?
- Is your child indicating that they have difficulty getting virtual imagery out of their heads?
- Is your child dreaming of virtual imagery?
- Is your child hiding their screen usage or devices from you?
- Does your child seem to be having a more difficult time regulating their emotions?
- Does your child seem more apathetic and bored more easily?
- Does your child seem tired yet wired?
- Is your child falling asleep in school because of excess technology use?

If you answered yes to multiple of the questions above, or if you have significant concerns with your child's technology use consider developing a plan to help make changes. Collaborate with your child's teacher, therapist, or other professional as needed for support.



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CREATING A PLAN FOR BALANCING TECHNOLOGY

After considering how your child uses technology, you may be ready to create a plan for balancing technology. Below are two examples of what a technology plan can look like as well as a sample template you can use for making your plan.

Technology Plan

Child's Name: Sue Date: December 9, 2021

Sue enjoys playing on the iPad but becomes very upset if anyone sits next to her or tries to join her. She also becomes upset when it is time to give up the iPad. Her parents would like for her to use the iPad with them for learning along with using it for entertainment. This includes learning to tolerate another person near her when she is using the iPad and sharing control of the iPad with that person.

Goal: What do you want to change or accomplish? When will you do this by?	Sue will take turns with an adult or peer while playing with learning apps on the iPad with no more than 1 verbal prompt for each 10 minute play time by January 5, 2022.
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How can you break down this goal?		
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Sue will continue to play on the iPad while an adult watches and comments on what she is doing.	Sue will continue to stay in play area and watch while an adult takes a short turn on the iPad app.	Sue will take turns back and forth with her parent or another adult while using a learning app on the iPad.



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Technology Plan

Child's Name: John Date: December 9, 2021

John is working to become more independent in getting ready in the mornings. His Mom would like for him to do this without so many reminders from her. John likes technology and his Mom thinks maybe using an app might help him. They decide to use the First/Then app to create a visual schedule of his morning routine and he can check off each task as he finishes it.

Goal: What do you want to change or accomplish? When will you do this by?	John will get ready for school in the morning with no more than one reminder from his Mom every day for two weeks by May 15, 2022.
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How can you break down this goal?		
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
John and his Mom will use the First/Then app to list the tasks that he needs to complete to get ready in the morning.	John will use the First/Then app with support from his Mom as needed to keep him on task when getting ready in the morning.	John will independently get ready for school in the mornings, using his First/Then app to check off the tasks as he completes them. When he is ready, he will review the tasks on the app with his Mom to make sure he didn't forget any part of his routine.

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Technology Plan

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Goal: What do you want to change or accomplish? When will you do this by?	
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How can you break down this goal?		
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3



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RESOURCES

Healthy Children from the American Academy of Pediatrics

Tool for creating a media plan for children and families.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx#wizard>

A great tool for looking at the activities of each day and developing a plan for media use for the entire family. Free.

Marcus Autism Center

Managing Screen Time

<https://www.marcus.org/autism-resources/autism-tips-and-resources/managing-screen-time>

This section of their website offers tips on managing screen time for children with ASD. Free.

Autism Speaks

How Technology Can Help

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/tool-kit-excerpt/how-technology-can-help>

This information is part of a Transition Toolkit providing information and ideas for how technology can assist in the transition out of high school.

The Oklahoma Autism Network strongly encourages families and providers to review these materials for goodness of fit before sharing them with the individuals they support.



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