

Digital Tech Addiction

Preschoolers and Pixels

By: Amy Reyes -Hauff



About Amy Reyes-Hauff

Amy Reyes-Hauff is an early childhood education leader with 26+ years of experience in child development, teaching, program leadership, and state government.

She is an expert in outdoor learning, early literacy, and digital tech wellness. Through Get Wild Wyoming, she has brought outdoor learning to 300+ classrooms and reached 6,000+ children.

Amy advocates for unplugged play, emotional intelligence, and reconnecting children with the natural world. She holds degrees and endorsements in elementary education, early childhood education, outdoor learning, child development, and organizational leadership.

Author of Why Did They Do That?

Developmental & Cognitive Delays

- Language & Communication: 1-year-olds exposed to more than 4 hours of screen time per day showed significant delays in communication and problem-solving skills at ages 2 and 4.
- Academic Performance: Each one-hour increase in TV exposure at age 2 is linked to a 7% decrease in classroom participation and a 6% decrease in math proficiency by the fourth grade.
- School Readiness: Children with high screen use often enter school lacking basic skills, such as the ability to follow simple instructions or engage with toys, which are critical predictors of later academic success.

Opening Poll

How much screen time do you think preschoolers typically get each day?

1. Less than 1 hour
2. 1–2 hours
3. 3 hours
4. More than 3 hours

Increasing Device Usage in Preschool Classrooms

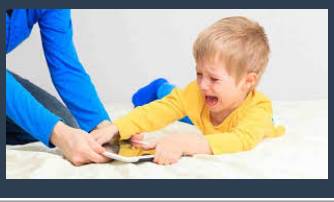


Understanding the digital landscape for kids

It's essential to recognize **device dependency** among preschoolers.

What is Tech Addiction?

Digital tech addiction in preschoolers is excessive device use that hinders normal development and daily activities.



. Behavioral & Emotional Issues

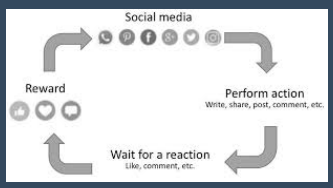
- ADHD & Focus: Children aged 5 or younger who watch 2+ hours of screen time daily are nearly 8 times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD.
- Emotional Regulation: Excessive use is associated with a "vicious circle" of socioemotional problems, including increased aggression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.
- Overstimulation: Fast-paced programs can over-stimulate young brains; for every hour of daily TV, a child's risk of developing attention problems increases by roughly 10%.

Reflection Poll

Which potential effect of excessive screen time concerns you most?

1. Attention and focus
2. Sleep patterns
3. Social development
4. Language or learning

The Rise of Screen Time



Average Daily Screen Time

"3 hours"

Preschoolers spend an average of three hours daily.

Increased Screen Time

"50% increase"

Screen time has risen by 50% over recent years.



Research Findings on Effects





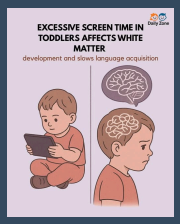
Excessive screen time can significantly impact **attention span**, disrupt **sleep patterns**, and hinder **social development** in preschoolers, leading to long-term consequences on their growth and well-being.

Signs and Symptoms Poll

Which sign of screen dependence would be most concerning to you?

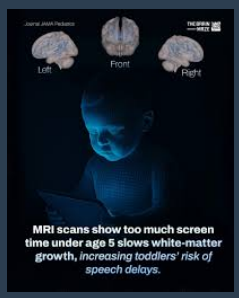
1. Preferring devices to real-life activities
2. Irritability when a device is removed
3. Losing interest in other activities
4. None of these

Expert Insights on Screen Time



Lets get nerdy

Recent research highlights the impact of screen time on toddlers' developing brains. Studies show that toddlers who spend excessive hours in front of screens may experience impaired white matter growth, which is critical for efficient brain communication and overall cognitive development. White matter acts as the brain's information highway, connecting different regions and supporting learning, attention, and problem-solving.



Recognizing Digital Tech Addiction



Signs and Symptoms

Understanding digital tech addiction in preschoolers



Excessive Device Use

Preschoolers may show **excessive reliance** on screens when they prefer devices over real-life interactions and activities, often choosing screen time even in social settings.

Irritability

When devices are removed, children may exhibit **irritability and distress**, demonstrating a strong emotional attachment and difficulty coping with the absence of technology.

Loss of Interest

Children may experience a **loss of interest** in other activities they once enjoyed, such as playing with toys or engaging in outdoor play, favoring screens instead.

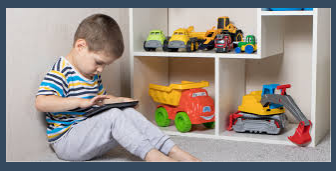
Understanding Device Separation Anxiety





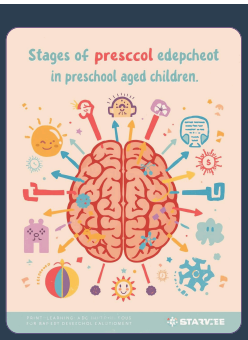
Separation anxiety in preschoolers often manifests as **distress and withdrawal** when devices are removed. This can lead to **significant emotional challenges**, impacting social interactions and overall development.

Why Preschoolers Are Vulnerable

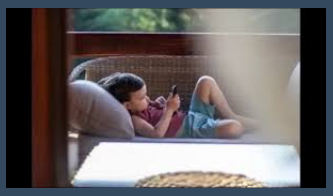


Brain Development

Preschoolers experience rapid brain development, affecting impulse control and making them more susceptible to digital distractions.

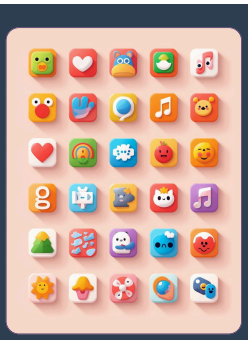


How Devices Attract Preschoolers



Addictive Design Elements

Design features like **vibrant colors**, engaging sounds, and interactive elements make devices highly appealing to preschoolers.

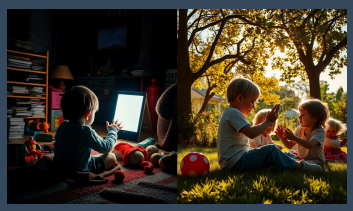


Action Poll

Which strategy would you be most likely to try?

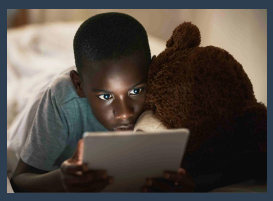
1. Set clear screen-time limits
2. Encourage outdoor play
3. Offer creative arts and crafts
4. Support emotional expression and communication

The Role of Parents



Shared Responsibility

Parents and educators must collaborate to ensure preschoolers develop **healthy tech habits** and emotional resilience.



Strategies to Reduce Dependence



Strategies for Reducing Dependence



Key Approaches for Educators

- Establish clear screen time limits
- Encourage outdoor play activities
- Promote creative arts and crafts
- Support emotional expression and communication

Creating Screen Time Rules



Age-Appropriate Limits

Setting clear, **age-appropriate time limits** helps preschoolers balance screen time with outdoor play and social interactions.



Lets tackle this together

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