Today’s piece was prepared by Mark Castera, MD, based on a story in the Irish Examiner [Do smartphones and tablets harm a child’s development?](https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/healthandlife/do-smartphones-and-tablets-harm-a-childs-development-447125.html)

This opinion piece was published in response to AAP recommendations in 2016 with revised screen time guidelines. The author is a father who raises questions of how harmful screen time is to child development and if the strict AAP guidelines are necessary since they are quite challenging to follow. The article discusses how children are still developing impulse control which makes them particularly susceptible to developing “behavioral addictions” to electronic devices. The advent of technology like the iPhone has introduced a new scenario where there is no natural going off point because these devices can be taken anywhere and can stream endless amounts of continuous entertainment through videos and interactive apps. The author cites a psychologist who seeks to differentiate between enjoyment and addiction and remarks that it is inappropriate to equate them when describing the prevalence of children’s interaction with technology.

While the author points out that not all screen time is created equal and that all children are unique, he also claims that studies surrounding screen time are of insufficient quality to make strong recommendations for screen time guidelines. Developmental effects of early childhood and frequent or extensive screen time, including possible lost opportunities to play with others and to exercise imagination freely, are under frequent debate.

The author neglects to identify well established reasons for screen time limitation, including sleep interferences, delays in learning and social skills, and behavioral problems caused by excessive media use. Although it is certainly challenging for parents, there is insufficient evidence at this point to support weakening strict screen time guidelines substantially.

**RESOURCES FOR PARENTS ON SCREEN TIME:**

[Common Sense Media](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/screen-time/how-much-screen-time-is-ok-for-my-kids)  
[Media & Children Communication Toolkit](https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Pages/Media-and-Children.aspx) *American Academy of Pediatrics*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!