Today’s piece was prepared by Ben Fife, MS4, based on a New York Times article [Screen use tied to children’s brain development](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/04/well/family/screen-use-tied-to-childrens-brain-development.html).

This article discussed a cross-sectional study published in *JAMA Pediatrics* that identified a relationship in children, ages 3-5, between increased screen time reported by parents and lower measures of structural intensity on diffusion tensor MRI imaging in areas of the brain involving language and literacy.

The author begins by disclosing a professional relationship with the author of the JAMA article and that they are the national medical director of Reach Out and Read, acknowledging bias in favor of the findings of the study. Regardless, the article does a thorough job explaining how the study was conducted. It explains how the results imply association and not causation given the type of study. The author even goes at lengths to argue against labeling screen usage as "bad"; they argue that when screens are used in excess it replaces other necessary interactions to signal brain development and that screen time needs to be balanced with activities like speaking and reading.

Although thorough, the article is heavy on scientific terms that are partially explained making it difficult to be understood by the general populace. Most importantly, this article fails to point out that the findings are neither generalizable nor can they comment on future development or ability of children, given that the participants consisted of English-speaking children from middle to upper class families in a cross-sectional study.

**RESOURCES ON SCREEN USE:**

[Children and Media Tips](https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/Pages/Children-and-Media-Tips.aspx) *AAP guidance*

[Family Media Plan](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx) *AAP guidance through HealthyChildren.org*

[Common Sense Media](http://www.commonsensemedia.org) *Website informs parents on the content of movies, shows, and games*

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