



### Sidetracked by Screens

My kids use digital tools at school every day to learn math, reading, and social studies, and to take tests, and more. My husband and I worry that so much time on their screens leads to distraction. For example, they may be looking up information for homework and, while skimming through the pages and links, their eyes are drawn to other things. They can get completely sidetracked.

The internet gives them access to an almost infinite amount of information. But, as my husband says, "The information on the web is like the water on the planet, not all of it can be drunk." Therefore, our role as parents is to check the sip of water they are about to drink from the internet and make sure it is appropriate for them at their young age.

### Strict Schedule

This is why when our children use devices and are online, we are always checking on them. We never leave them alone in their room. We set a time limit. When the time ends, we just pick up the tablet or phone, even if they get upset. We have a very strict schedule for when they can use technology.

### Many Pros and Cons

Digital tools have pros and cons. On the one hand, digital tools can be excellent for learning and exploring. They can make learning more interactive, engaging, and fun for young children.

On the other hand, excessive screen time can negatively affect children's attention, language development, and social skills. Screens can disrupt sleep, which is bad for children's physical and mental health. Spending time online can mean children are exposed to bullying, stalkers, and kidnappers. There are many dangers!

### Life Is More than a Screen

Since digital tools are a part of everyday life, we need to teach our children how to use digital tools in a safe and responsible way. Like any tool, they can be used for good or bad. We encourage our daughters to play more with their toys, dolls, or with whatever they want in the backyard, using their imagination. However, we also promote the safe use of screens. We understand that they're useful and necessary, but maybe life can be more than 10 by 7 inches!

**AFTER YOU READ:** Look at the sample schedule on the next page and do the activity.

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*Angelica Fernandez is a student in the English for Internationally Trained Professionals class at the Ysleta Community Learning Center in El Paso, Texas.*



| Kids Weekly Calendar |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                      | Monday                                    | Tuesday                                   | Wednesday                                 | Thursday                                  | Friday                                    | Saturday  | Sunday                                    |
| 7:00-8:00            | Breakfast/<br>get ready<br>for the<br>day | Breakfast/<br>get ready<br>for the<br>day | Breakfast/<br>get ready<br>for the<br>day | Breakfast/<br>get ready<br>for the<br>day | Breakfast/<br>get ready<br>for the<br>day |   |   |
| 8:00-9:00            | Walk/ride<br>to school                    | Walk/ride<br>to school                    | Walk/ride<br>to school                    | Walk/ride<br>to school                    | Walk/ride<br>to school                    | Breakfast/<br>get ready<br>for the<br>day               | Breakfast/<br>get ready<br>for the<br>day |
| 9:00-10:00           | School/<br>day care                       | School/<br>day care                       | School/<br>day care                       | School/<br>day care                       | School/<br>day care                       | Play/<br>Screen<br>time                                 | Church                                    |
| 10:00-11:00          |   |   |   |   |   | Free time/<br>sports/<br>visit<br>family and<br>friends |   |
| 11:00-12:00          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 12:00-1:00           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1:00-2:00            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 2:00-3:00            |   |   |   |   |   | Chores/<br>homework                                     |   |
| 3:00-4:00            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 4:00-5:00            | Free time/<br>Sports/<br>Play             | Free time/<br>Sports/<br>Play             | Free time/<br>Sports/<br>Play             | Free time/<br>Sports/<br>Play             | Free time/<br>Sports/<br>Play             |   |   |
| 5:00-6:00            | Chores/<br>homework                       | Chores/<br>homework                       | Chores/<br>homework                       | Chores/<br>homework                       | Chores/<br>homework                       | Screen<br>time  | Screen<br>time                            |
| 6:00-6:30            | Dinner                                    | Dinner                                    | Dinner                                    | Dinner                                    | Dinner                                    | Dinner  | Dinner                                    |
| 6:30-7:30            | Screen<br>time                            | Screen<br>time                            | Screen<br>time                            | Screen<br>time                            | Screen<br>time                            | Screen<br>time  | Screen<br>time                            |
| 7:30-8:30            | Quiet<br>time/<br>music/<br>reading       | Quiet<br>time/<br>music/<br>reading       | Quiet<br>time/<br>music/<br>reading       | Quiet<br>time/<br>music/<br>reading       | Quiet<br>time/<br>music/<br>reading       | Quiet<br>time/<br>music/<br>reading                     | Quiet<br>time/<br>music/<br>reading       |
| 8:30                 | Bedtime                                   | Bedtime                                   | Bedtime                                   | Bedtime                                   | Bedtime                                   | Bedtime   | Bedtime                                   |

Here is a sample schedule made in Google docs: <https://tinyurl.com/calendar4kids>. Make a copy of it and then adapt it for your own families. Or use paper or another digital tool. Refer to the chart on p. 7 for information about how much screen time your children should get each day.