



TECHNOLOGY AND SCREEN USE

Using screens before bed can affect a child's sleep in a few key ways.

The blue light from devices can disrupt the body's natural production of melatonin, the hormone that helps us feel sleepy. This can make it harder for children to fall asleep and can impact how well they stay asleep.

On top of that, screen content like games or videos can be stimulating, making it more difficult for children to switch off and relax before bed. This can lead to longer settling times and lighter, less restful sleep.



HOW TO FADE IT OUT:

Start by setting a clear cut-off point for screens before bedtime. You might begin by reducing screen time gradually, for example by 15 minutes every few nights, until screens are stopped around an hour before bed.

Replace screen time with calming activities such as reading together, listening to music, gentle stretching, or quiet chats. This helps your child start to wind down.

Create a consistent bedtime routine without screens. Simple steps like a bath, brushing teeth, getting into pyjamas, and reading a story signal that it's time for sleep.

Lead by example by reducing your own screen use in the evening. Children often copy what they see.

Talk to your child about the changes so they understand why screens are being limited and how it helps their sleep.

Change can take time, so stay consistent. Gradually reducing screens and replacing them with calmer activities will make the transition much smoother.





TECHNOLOGY AND SCREEN USE

OTHER HELPFUL TIPS FOR FADING SCREENS.

- Let devices run out of charge: Start the evening with low battery so the device naturally turns off, rather than it feeling like it's being taken away
- Keep charging outside the bedroom: Have a set charging spot in another room to reduce temptation overnight
- Limit access to WiFi: Turning off or changing the WiFi at a set time can help reinforce boundaries
- Allow time for tech during the day: For many children, devices are how they relax and socialise, so make sure they still have access earlier in the day
- Use rewards consistently: A simple reward system can help motivate and reinforce reduced screen use over time





TECHNOLOGY AND SCREEN USE

Many older children and young people — particularly those who are neurodivergent — have come to rely on screens as part of their wind-down routine, and that's more common than you might think. Screens can provide the sensory input, distraction from anxious thoughts, or sense of familiarity that helps a busy brain finally switch off. Rather than removing screens abruptly (which can create more stress, not less), the goal is to gently shape how they're used so they support sleep rather than disrupt it.

- **TV ON TIMER:** If your child falls asleep to the television, using the sleep timer function is a simple but effective adjustment. Keeping the screen on all night means the brain continues to process light and sound even in lighter sleep stages, reducing overall sleep quality. Setting the TV to switch off after 30–45 minutes means your child gets the comfort of the familiar background noise to drift off, while their brain is given the chance to settle into deeper, more restorative sleep once the screen goes dark.
- **NOTHING OVERLY STIMULATING:** Content choice matters just as much as screen time itself. Fast-paced shows, action sequences, jump scares, or emotionally charged storylines keep the nervous system on high alert — the opposite of what we need for sleep. Encourage your child to choose something slow, familiar, and low-stakes at bedtime: a nature documentary, a comfort re-run they know inside out, or something gentle and predictable. The brain finds it much easier to let go when it isn't waiting to find out what happens next.
- **TRY AN AUDIOBOOK INSTEAD:** Audiobooks can be a brilliant middle ground for screen-reliant sleepers — they provide the same sense of company, story, and auditory engagement, without any of the light stimulation that disrupts melatonin production. Many children find that being read to (even digitally) is deeply soothing, and the lack of visual input means there's nothing to keep the eyes open for. Platforms like Audible, Spotify, or your local library app offer a huge range of titles, and like a favourite TV show, a familiar story listened to again and again can become a comforting sleep ritual in its own right.

