

FREE PARENT GUIDE



PARENT GUIDE TO SCREEN-TIME TRANSITIONS

Help your child stop screen time calmly, use respectful words, and move to the next activity with less arguing and more success.





Screen time is not the problem by itself. For many families, the hardest part is the transition out of it. A child may be deeply focused, emotionally invested, overstimulated, or simply disappointed that the fun is ending.

Like any other life skill, transitioning away from screens can be taught, practiced, and improved over time.

You have 5 more minutes, then we transition.



★ THIS GUIDE WILL HELP YOU:

-  understand why screen-time transitions can be hard
-  teach a simple step-by-step transition plan
-  reduce arguing, stalling, and emotional blowups
-  build respectful habits and follow-through at home

📄 RELATED WORKSHEETS

Use these with your child to practice and build success!

1 Screen-Time Transition Guide for Kids

A step-by-step plan to help kids stop screen time calmly and move to the next activity.



2 Self-Control Reset Sheet for Kids

A quick reset tool for big feelings so kids can calm their body, use their words, and make better choices.



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WHY SCREEN-TIME TRANSITIONS ARE HARD

A smoother transition starts with understanding what your child is experiencing.

Many children do not struggle with screen time itself as much as they struggle with stopping. Screens are exciting, rewarding, and deeply engaging, so shifting away from them can feel abrupt and frustrating.

Just one more minute!



WHAT PARENTS OFTEN SEE

- arguing
- ignoring directions
- “one more minute” requests
- whining or melting down
- trouble moving on to homework, dinner, bath, or bedtime



WHY IT HAPPENS

- deep focus and reward loops
- disappointment when fun ends
- uncertainty about what comes next
- overstimulation
- difficulty shifting attention



A HEALTHY FAMILY APPROACH

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends creating a family media plan that fits your routines, including screen-free zones and one screen at a time.¹

The CDC also recommends limiting recreational screen time and encouraging sleep, movement, family time, and other healthy routines.²



MINDSET SHIFT

Stopping screen time is not a punishment. It is a life skill transition.



¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. (2016). Media use in school-aged children and adolescents.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Screen time and young children.

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The Horizon Screen-Time Transition Plan

Teach one simple routine and practice it the same way each time.



1 GIVE THE WARNING

Let your child know screen time is ending soon:
 "You have 5 minutes left."
 "When this show ends, we are done."



2 PAUSE OR SAVE

Teach your child to stop safely: pause the show, save the game, or close the app.



3 RESET THE BODY

Take a deep breath, put the device down carefully, lower the voice, and get ready to move on.



4 USE RESPECTFUL WORDS

Practice short responses like:
 "Okay."
 "Can I save this first?"
 "What is next?"



5 MOVE TO THE NEXT ACTIVITY

Go directly into the next step: homework, dinner, bath, bedtime, reading, chores, outside play, or family time.



KEY PRINCIPLE:

The smoother the next step is, the easier the transition becomes.



TIP: Tell children what comes next before screen time begins. Predictability helps.

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What Parents Can Say

Calm, short, consistent language helps children transition with less stress.



1 BEFORE SCREEN TIME

- “When the timer ends, it is time to stop.”
- “Today you may watch one show, then we move to dinner.”
- “You can play for 20 minutes, then we transition.”

2 DURING THE WARNING

- “You have 5 more minutes.”
- “Two more minutes.”
- “Please think about what you need to finish.”

3 AT TRANSITION TIME

- “It is time to pause and transition.”
- “Pause it, put it down, and take a breath.”
- “Use your words if you need help.”

4 IF YOUR CHILD PROTESTS

- “I hear that you want more time.”
- “It is still time to stop.”
- “You may be upset, and you still need to transition.”
- “I can help you do this calmly.”

5 PRAISE STATEMENTS

- “You turned it off the first time.”
- “Nice job using a calm body.”
- “Thank you for asking respectfully.”
- “You were disappointed, but you still transitioned.”

WHAT HELPS MOST

-  Stay calm.
-  Avoid long debates.
-  Avoid repeating directions too many times.
-  Praise the first small success.
-  Be consistent, not harsh.



Calm, clear, consistent beats loud, long, and emotional.

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When Transitions Keep Going Badly

Look at the system first, then make small adjustments and keep practicing.



1 6 THINGS TO CHECK

- 1 Is the expectation clear?
- 2 Are you giving a warning?
- 3 Is the next step ready?
- 4 Are you staying calm?
- 5 Are you being consistent?
- 6 Are you praising success?

2 ADJUSTMENTS TO TRY

- Shorter screen sessions
- Fewer transitions in one day
- No screens right before bed
- Turn off autoplay when possible
- Make the next activity clear and ready
- Use the same routine every time

3 FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Screen-time transitions do not improve because children are yelled at more. They improve because children are taught more clearly, practiced more consistently, and guided more calmly. Small wins matter.



4 HORIZON ENCOURAGEMENT

At Horizon ATA, we help kids build focus, self-control, listening, confidence, and follow-through on and off the mat.



RELATED RESOURCES

Use these resources with your child to practice and build success!



Screen-Time Transition Guide for Kids

A simple step plan to help kids stop screen time calmly and move to the next activity.



Self-Control Reset Sheet for Kids

A quick reset tool to help kids calm their body, use their words, and make better choices.

REFERENCES

1. American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *How to Make a Family Media Plan*. HealthyChildren.org.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Tips to Support Healthy Routines for Children and Teens*.



Progress may start small: fewer arguments, faster pausing, calmer body language, and smoother movement to the next activity.



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