



# technology use in early childhood

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Screen time is one of many factors that can impact tamariki and their development and occurs in the wider context of whānau lives.

Its use has increased dramatically in recent years. Younger and younger children, including babies, are becoming regular users of screens.

## The effects of screen use

The effects of screen use on tamariki depend on a number of variables including:

- The child's age
- The content they're watching
- The amount of time they spend using screens
- The quality and quantity of adult guidance and supervision.

## Screen use can affect tamariki both directly and indirectly.

- Direct: Effects relate to what tamariki are seeing and hearing (e.g. scary images, violence, content intended for older children/adults)
- Indirect: Time spent using screens lessens the amount of time available for more developmentally valuable activities (e.g. playing, talking with whānau).

## The amount of use makes a difference

- Less screen time means less chance of undesirable effects (e.g. every once in a while for shorter periods)
- More screen time means a greater chance of poor outcomes (e.g. daily, for longer periods)
- It's worth considering the total amount of screen time tamariki have throughout the day and across all areas of their lives (e.g. at home, at ECE, with grandparents).



## Potential risks & benefits

### 1. Risks

Some of the areas that can be affected by screen use in early childhood include:

- Sleep (e.g. reduced quality and amount of sleep)
- Language (e.g. increased likelihood of language delays)
- Wellbeing & behaviour (e.g. lower self-control, less curiosity)
- Physical health (e.g. increased weight, reduced physical activity).

**NB** These outcomes are more likely for those who are:

- Using screens from a young age
- Spending a lot of time using screens.



### 2. Benefits

The following are possible benefits of technology use in early childhood:

- Video chatting apps (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, Zoom) can help tamariki connect with whānau who don't live nearby
- As a distraction prior to/during medical procedures.

From around 3 years of age, children can learn from some media when:

- it's suitable for their age and development
- a parent or other adult is involved in the activity with them.

### Points to note

- Parental screen use affects tamariki too, especially frequent or high use (e.g. through reduced interactions between parent and child)
- Individual children will react differently, with some children more affected than others (e.g. children exposed to family aggression tend to be more affected by media violence, than other children)
- Claims of 'educational' or 'developmental' benefits from specific products (e.g. apps) help sell them, but are often not supported by credible research
- While newer technology is more interactive than older technology (e.g. phone app compared to TV watching) it is still limited compared to real world experiences.

## To sum up

- Generally, tamariki under 3 years of age are unlikely to learn from screen use
- Screen use cannot replace the value of parent-child interactions and 'real world' exploration and play
- Effects of screen use depend on several factors, including the child's age, the content, the amount of time spent, and adult support.

### Want to know more?

See these articles:

Tamariki & technology: Insights from the research <https://brainwave.org.nz/article/tamariki-technology-insights-from-the-research/>

Print book or e-book: Does it matter? <https://brainwave.org.nz/article/print-book-or-e-book-does-it-matter/>

Tots, toddlers and TV: The potential harm <https://brainwave.org.nz/article/tots-toddlers-and-tv-the-potential-harm/>