

## RUIWise?

**Internet technology** has brought new demands on human time and attention causing many to feel overwhelmed. Parents and caregivers may seek relief by using this same technology to occupy children but, these short-term solutions could lead to long-term problems.

**Because you want what's best for your loved ones**, we've created a resource to help you understand the dangers of using a screen as an electronic babysitter. We've also provided some healthier alternatives you can be proud of.



### Your Online Time Matters Too!

Research is finding that a caregiver's use of electronic screens can also be detrimental to the health and well-being of children decreasing self-esteem and empathy. Choose wisely. Children need you, not Youtube.™

#### References

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*Promoting the healthy use of internet-connected electronic screens*

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# THE ELECTRONIC BABYSITTER CONCERNS AND ALTERNATIVES



*Based on Academic Research  
and Expert Consensus*



## CONCERNS

*Early or excessive screen use can negatively affect:*

### Physical Health

Screen time often replaces physical play, affecting motor skills and overall health. Excessive screen time can lead to a sedentary lifestyle which increases the risk of childhood obesity and negatively impacts cardiovascular health.

### Brain Development

Early experiences shape neural connections. Human interaction and exploration of the natural environment are crucial for optimal brain growth.

### Language Development

Lack of face-to-face communication can delay language development. Screens don't provide the rich language exposure real-world interactions do.

### Cognitive Skills

Screens don't provide the same cognitive benefits as real-world experiences, such as reading or problem-solving.

### Sleep Quality

Screens are stimulating and emit blue light that can make it difficult to fall asleep or attain sufficient, quality sleep.

### Eye Health

Screen use can strain developing eyes and contribute to myopia.

### Psychosocial Well-Being

Excessive screen exposure can lead to social isolation, poor emotional well-being, and social interactions.

### Social Skills

Screen-based entertainment can hinder verbal and nonverbal social skills that develop through real-world interactions with other children and adults.

### Parent-Child Relationships

Excessive screen use can reduce face-to-face interactions between parents and children, impacting bonding and communication.

### Mental Health

Exposure to upsetting, inappropriate, or traumatic content or contacts can lead to depression, anxiety or other mental disorders.

### Attention Span

Screens produce bright colors, flashing lights, and varied sounds that capture children's attention making it more difficult to sit still and focus without them.

### Self Control

Screens can interfere with emotional regulation and impulse control.

### Creativity

If children are never bored due to constant screen exposure, they miss opportunities to think creatively, develop problem-solving skills, and build self-sufficiency.

### Addiction Risk

Early screen exposure may increase the risk of technology addiction later in life.



## ALTERNATIVES

*Activities that entertain and educate while you wait*

### I Spy

Take turns guessing what the other person spies (sees). You start your turn by saying "I Spy with My Little Eye something beginning with the letter: \_\_\_." For younger kids, try the color version "I spy something colored red".

### Twenty Questions

The first person thinks of an object or thing and the others have 20 questions to guess what it is. Questions must only have a Yes or No answer.

### Alphabet Zoo

Each player takes a turn to come up with an animal, bird, insect, or reptile name in order of the alphabet. So, for example, Armadillo, Bear, Cat, etc. Tip: for X we allow Fox or any other animals that have an X in the name.

### Dots and Boxes

You'll need a piece of paper and something to write with. Start by making an empty grid of dots. Players take turns adding a single line between two unjoined dots next to each other. The player who completes the fourth side of the 1x1 box puts their initial into the middle of that box. The player with the most boxes at the end of the game wins.

### Mini Scavenger Hunt

If you are in a waiting room with magazines, use them for a mini scavenger hunt. Instruct your child to seek and find certain items, for example, "Find something red that starts with a P," or "Find a yellow car."

### Others

Thumb wrestling  
Rock/Paper/Scissors  
Peek-a-Boo, Pat-a-Cake  
Tell a story, Read a book  
Color, Draw, Legos, Playdough

