

The Pros and Cons of

Screen Use



Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development*
Teen Brains. Today's Science. Brighter Future.

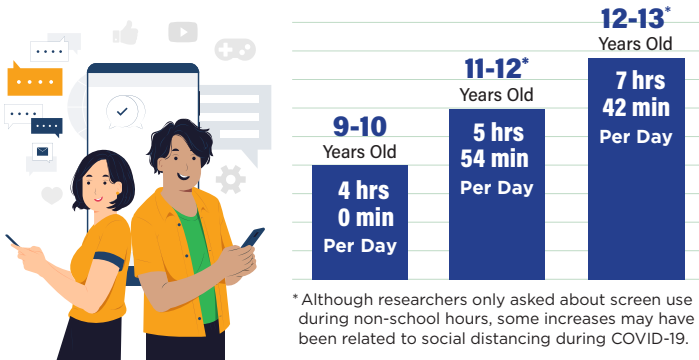
Research using data from the ABCD Study®, the largest long-term study of brain development and child health in the United States, has shown both positive and negative associations of screen use for preteens.



What is screen use?

Activities—such as texting, video gaming, and watching movies—done in front of a screen.

Youth use screens more as they get older



Average daily screen use*

Boys spend more time on:

Time by Activity

Activity	Boys	Girls
Video Games (single player)	1 hr 40 min	42 min
Video Games (multiplayer)	2 hrs 13 min	41 min
TV & Movies Streaming	2 hrs 20 min	2 hrs 6 min

Girls spend more time on:

Time by Activity

Activity	Boys	Girls
Video Chat	26 min	51 min
Texting	38 min	1 hr 3 min
Social Media	39 min	1 hr 18 min

*12-13 years old (during COVID-19 pandemic)

When comparing participants' screen use, those who used screens more often showed a small increase in:

- Sleep problems
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Lower grades in school
- Number of close friends

*Defined as non-school-related media use: TV, movies, videos, video games, texting, social media, or video chat.

Video gaming is associated with increases in:

- ↑ Problem-solving
- ↑ Flexible thinking
- ↑ Recalling facts & skills

Social media is associated with decreases in:

- ↓ Problem-solving



Every additional hour spent watching videos meant less sleep

Together, more video watching *and* less sleep were related to small increases in:

<p>Feeling anxious/depressed</p> <p>Example: <i>Too fearful or anxious.</i></p>	<p>Feeling withdrawn/depressed</p> <p>Example: <i>Would rather be alone than with others.</i></p>	<p>Having thought problems</p> <p>Example: <i>Fears others are out to get them.</i></p>
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More than 2 hours of screen use* per day was associated with a slight increased risk for having a depressive disorder, suicidal thoughts/attempts, and self-harm in boys and girls.

It was also associated with an increased likelihood of anxiety in boys, but not girls.

*Defined as video chat, social media, texting, gaming, online videos, TV, and movies.

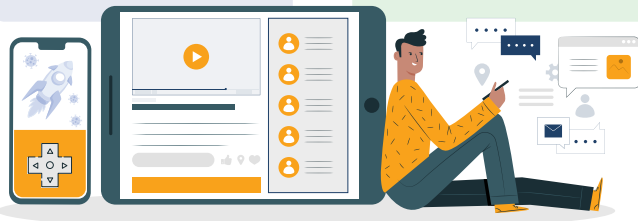
Cyberbullying risk increases with each additional hour of screen use



Participants who played single-player video games had a **14% greater** chance of being cyberbullied for each additional hour of game time.

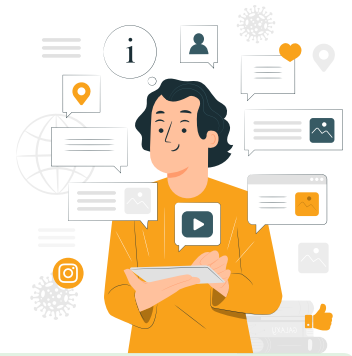


For each additional hour of *total* screen time, participants had an **11% greater** chance of experiencing cyberbullying and a **10% greater** chance of cyberbullying someone else.



During the COVID-19 pandemic,

participants with poorer mental health and greater stress said they used screens more often than participants who had more social support and other coping behaviors.



Recommendations for Caregivers

- Consider limiting screen time to 2-3 hours per day.
- If your child spends time on social media, have regular conversations with them about cyberbullying.
- Consider limiting your child's use of smartphones and other devices at bedtime to help ensure they get enough sleep.



These studies showed that time spent on screens was associated with a lot of things, good and bad, at the time data were collected. They didn't show that one thing caused the other. Many things could have affected these findings, which may also change over time. Researchers continue to explore these questions.



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This information is made possible by the Adolescent Brain Cognitive DevelopmentSM Study

Thank you to ABCD families for giving so much of their time to make this study possible. Youth participating in this research help scientists answer important questions that improve their understanding about screen use in adolescence and beyond. These and other ABCD-supported studies help us learn more about how the brain develops, improving the health and well-being of youth now and in future generations.

Learn more: <https://abcdstudy.org/families>

News Coverage and References

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Video gaming may have some cognitive benefits for kids, study finds:
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Study shows significant changes in sleep timing and screen use among children during the pandemic:
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