

# The 5 Cs of Media Use



## INFANCY: 0–18 MONTHS

From birth to 18 months, infants are building secure relationships with parents and caregivers, understanding and expressing early language, and quickly learning to move their bodies so they can explore the world and the objects around them. Emotionally, infants learn to self-soothe, fall asleep without depending on being held, enjoy playing back and forth with others, and learn new things. These are important tasks that media shouldn't crowd out.

### ASK YOURSELF THE 5 Cs

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

#### **C**hild

*Who is your child and how do they react to media?*

Each infant is unique—how fussy they get with changes to their routine, or how easily they self-soothe. This influences their relationship with you and with media. From a young age, try to be aware of their emotional and learning capabilities so you are aware of how they may react to certain types of media.

#### **C**ontent

*What is worth their attention?*

FaceTime, Skype, or other video chats can be beneficial to help build relationships between your child and other loved ones.

Infants can't otherwise learn much from screens at this age, so media such as cartoons or nursery rhyme videos are not recommended. If you do put on any media for your infant, brief use of educational programs like PBS KIDS or Sesame Street, which are created with an understanding of child development, are a good place to start. Avoid: Prolonged TV or YouTube viewing.

#### **C**alm

*How do they calm their emotions to go to sleep?*

Fussy babies are more likely to be given media such as TV or videos to calm down, but this gets in the way of helping babies learn to self-soothe. Self-soothing is an important tool—it is the ability to calm down by themselves. Try to **not** get in the habit of using media to stop your baby from crying, to get them to sleep, or to distract them while eating so screens do not become the sole source of comfort or calmness. Find other ways to help infants calm down at [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) or [ZeroToThree.org](https://www.zerotothree.org). Every caregiver questions their abilities during tough times, but these can be great opportunities to build confidence in your parenting!

#### **C**rowding Out

*What does media get in the way of?*

Screen media—whether in the background, on a parent's mobile device, or on a tablet in front of a baby—displaces the important building blocks of brain development. This includes speaking to your baby or others around them, back-and-forth play, singing, reading together, or building predictable daily routines that help your child feel safe and secure. Be mindful of how you use your smartphone or TV around your child and give yourself screen-free times, too, to focus on your own well-being and your baby.

#### **C**ommunication

*How can you talk about media to raise a media savvy, responsible child?*

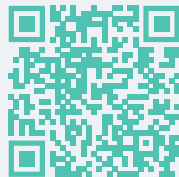
Infants may not be able to talk yet, but they are always watching and listening to you. If media is on in your home, watch together and talk about what you are seeing. Use it as a launching pad for teaching or playing. Songs and stories in your own voice are going to make more of a positive impact on your child than any video or cartoon.

## Family Media Plan

Parents of infants might find the Family Media Plan useful as you think about setting up boundaries around your own media consumption, and as your child watches and potentially mimics your behavior. At this stage, managing media use well is important for interacting with your infant and getting enough sleep. A pediatrician or therapist can help you find ways other than media to help calm your child down.



Make a Media Plan  
for the whole family  
(parents too!).



## About Us

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health is dedicated to creating a healthy digital ecosystem for children and adolescents. Social media use starts during childhood and can play a significant role in the relationships and experiences that affect children and teens' growth, development, and mental health. The Center provides resources and tools for parents, clinicians, teachers, and youth to learn how to better navigate social media and the online world. Visit [aap.org/SocialMedia](https://aap.org/SocialMedia) for more information and resources.

We're here to help.

Explore our Q&A  
portal for answers  
to your questions  
about social  
media and youth  
mental health.



The 5 Cs were inspired and built upon the work of journalist & author of books about media and children, [Lisa Guernsey](#). The Three Cs were first described in the book *Into the Minds of Babes* (2007) and then *Screen Time* (2012) and *Tap, Click, Read: Growing Readers in a World of Screens* (2015).

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