

Screen Time and Homework: Finding a Better Balance

Screen time and homework are no longer separate parts of family life. Many assignments require a laptop, tablet, video, or online platform, so the useful question is not simply, “How many hours of screen time?” The better question is whether media is supporting the task or competing with it. Start by separating required school use from entertainment and social media. Before homework begins, identify which device is actually needed. Put other devices away, close unrelated tabs, and turn off nonessential notifications. The American Academy of Pediatrics’ Family Media Plan recommends screen-free zones or times, including during homework when media is not required, and suggests a one-screen-at-a-time rule to reduce distraction.¹ Recent AAP digital-media guidance also emphasizes protecting time for sleep, movement, reading, play, homework, and family life rather than relying on one universal screen-time number.² That approach works well at home: first protect the activities that must happen, then decide where entertainment media fits. If the assignment requires a screen, build a focus block. Work for an agreed period, then take a brief break away from the device. AAP guidance for school-age children asks families to consider what media may be “crowding out,” including homework and other important activities.³ Make the plan with your child instead of only announcing restrictions. Ask, “What usually pulls your attention away?” and let the child help choose the setting, focus mode, or device location. This turns the rule into a skill. Use first-then language when helpful: “First the two homework sections, then your game time.” The long-term goal is for the child to recognize when technology is helping and when it is taking control of attention.

Did You Know?

- ✓ AAP Family Media Plan guidance recommends screen-free homework when media is not needed and using one screen at a time to reduce distractions.¹
- ✓ AAP’s newer digital-media guidance emphasizes protecting sleep, movement, reading, play, homework, and family time rather than using one fixed screen-time rule for every child.²
- ✓ AAP’s 5 C’s framework asks families to notice what media may be crowding out, including homework and other healthy activities.³

Research Sources

1. American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org. “How to Make a Family Media Plan.”
2. American Academy of Pediatrics. “Digital Ecosystems, Children, and Adolescents: Policy Statement.” 2025.
3. American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org. “Kids & Screen Time: 5 C’s Questions for School-Age Children.”

Ten-Minute Homework Screen Plan

Use this page before homework to decide which technology is needed, what should be removed, and when entertainment media can return.

Child's name: _____ Date: _____

Homework task: _____ Device needed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

1. Identify the Required Screen - About 1 Minute

Decide whether the assignment actually requires a device.

Required device/site: _____

2. Remove Competing Screens - About 2 Minutes

Put away devices and tabs that are not needed for the assignment.

Put away/close: _____

3. Set the Focus Block - About 2 Minutes

Choose a realistic work period and turn on focus or do-not-disturb settings if available.

Focus block: _____ minutes Setting used: _____

4. Use First-Then - About 2 Minutes

State the work requirement and the preferred activity that follows it.

First: _____ Then: _____

5. Review the Balance - About 3 Minutes

Ask what helped attention and what should change next time.

What helped: _____ What distracted me: _____

What Parents Can Say: "You set up the technology so it worked for you."