
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

Limiting screen time for children



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Becca

And I'm Becca. Neil, I've noticed that you're pretty good at not checking your phone at work. How much time do you spend on your phone outside of work?

Neil

Yes, I probably was. You know, Becca, I spend far too much time looking at my phone, and I really don't like it. How about you?

Becca

I don't think you're alone. I also spend way too much time looking at my phone.

Neil

Well, Becca, we are both adults, but today we're talking about screen time and children screen time. Screen time - that's how much time you spend using devices like smart phones, tablets and laptops.

Becca

Yes, and it's a particular worry of many parents that their children spend too much time on these devices. At the end of last year, Australia banned access to social media apps for under 16s, and countries like the UK are considering similar measures.

Neil

So, why is this? In this episode, we'll hear from a clinical psychologist and research associate at the University of Cambridge talking about screentime and children. As usual, we'll be learning some useful new words and phrases. And remember, you'll find all this episode's vocabulary, along with a transcript, on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Becca

But first Neil, I have a question for you. According to The UK media regulator, how many children aged three to four have a smartphone? Is it:

- a) one in twenty
- b) one in ten, or
- c) one in five?

Neil

Wow. Well, I'm going to guess 1 in 20, but I think it's probably more than that.

Becca

Well, we'll find out the answer later. Dr Emily Goodacre is a research associate at the University of Cambridge. Here, she tells Shiona McCallum, presenter of BBC World Service programme, Tech Life, her thoughts on whether we should take away children's screen devices completely.

Dr Emily Goodacre

Yeah, I think it's not as much as getting them away from technology but being **intentional** about how we use technology with children. For me, **the bar absolutely needs to be higher**, and therefore I think about how to design products that think about childhood first and really think about how children at different stages learn and develop and then see if there's a way that technology can **enable** that.

Neil

Emily highlights how, rather than stopping children from using technology, parents need to be more **intentional** about how their children use it. An intention is a plan or reason to do something. So, to be **intentional** is to act with that plan or reason in mind. It may make you act more carefully as a result.

Becca

Emily also says **the bar needs to be higher**. The idiom the bar is low means that the standards, expectations, or requirements are minimal and very easy to meet. Therefore, she believes that **the bar needs to be higher** – parents need to make their expectations higher. They need to think or act more carefully when considering how much time children spend with technology. You might also hear people say set the bar higher or lower.

Neil

Emily believes that being more **intentional** and setting **the bar higher** will **enable** children to learn and develop alongside technology. If you **enable** something, you encourage somebody's ability to do something, or to make something possible.

Becca

Now let's hear Dr Becky Kennedy, a clinical psychologist and founder of an online parenting platform, talking about how parents feel about tech and children, for BBC World Service programme, Tech Life:

Dr Becky Kennedy

I find parents are very, very **eager** to understand what's really happening around technology in kids and then have practical, realistic things they can do in their home to make little **shifts** that feel better.

Neil

Becky has found that many parents are **eager** to understand their children's use of technology. **Eager** is an adjective that describes wanting to do or have something very much.

Becca

Becky also talks about making little **shifts**. A shift is a small change. It can be used as a verb or a noun. Becky shares an example of a **shift** that can help parents reduce children's screen time, moving the device somewhere it can't be seen:

Dr Becky Kennedy

You can even say to a kid, you know why I moved it? It's actually because it's a really hard thing for me to expect from you, to see a screen in a room and not want to use it. I wasn't **setting you up for success**.

Neil

Becky explains how it's difficult for children to be expected to reduce their screen time if they can see their device. Having the device in view doesn't **set them up for success**. If you **set someone up for something**, you prepare them for it.

Becca

Yes. For example, earlier, I **set Neil up for a shock** when I asked him a question about screen time. Neil, I asked you, according to The UK media regulator, how many children ages three to four have a smartphone.

Neil

And I said 1 in 20.

Becca

Well, it is in fact, see 1 in 5.

Neil

Wow. I thought it might be more than I said. Now, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **intentional**. It's an adjective that describes acting with a plan or reason in mind.

Becca

We had the expression **the bar needs to be higher**. To set the bar higher is to make your expectations higher.

Neil

We also had **enable**. This is to encourage someone's ability to do something, or to make something possible.

Becca

To be **eager** is to want to do or have something very much.

Neil

A **shift** is a small change. You can also use it as verb with to mean changing something slightly.

Becca

And if you **set someone up for something**, you prepare them for it. Once again, our six minutes are up. If you enjoyed this episode, you'll find a quiz and worksheet to practise the vocabulary we've learnt on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. See you again soon. But for now, it's goodbye.

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

intentional

acting with that plan or reason in mind

the bar needs to be higher

make your expectations higher

enable

encourage someone's ability to do something, or to make something possible

eager

want to do or have something very much

shift

a small change

set someone up for something

prepare someone for something