

Less screen time

More play time



Screens are impacting on children's development in so many ways. This map outlines the key impacts, examples of research related to the issues and how our **50 Things to Do Before You're Five** initiative is able to redress some of the concerns.

Note: We are not saying that 50 Things to Do Before You're Five is the only antidote, but it's a great place to start!

How does screen time impact on...

Language and Communication

Speech and Language UK report there are now 1.9 million children with speech and language challenges in the UK, an increase of 27% in the past 2 years.

50 things to Do Before You're Five supports language and communication skills by providing activities that are designed to support children's development through interactions with adults and their environment. None of these activities are screen based. When children do fun things, they will want to talk about them and these activities create rich, natural opportunities for children to hear, practice, and experiment with language.

Healthy Eating Habits

Research indicates that toddlers exposed to screens during meals are more likely to develop habits of eating in front of screens, which is associated with higher consumption of ultra-processed foods

50 Things to Do Before You're Five supports healthy eating habits with activities that encourage families to prepare food together. Screen-free mealtimes promote mindful eating, healthier food choices, stronger family bonds, and better mealtime behavior. They teach children to appreciate food, listen to their bodies, and engage meaningfully with others—laying the foundation for lifelong healthy eating habits.

Active Lifestyles

Research is reporting that physical activity levels for children are lower than recommended, and many are not getting the minimum amount of exercise needed for healthy growth.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five provides families with many activity ideas which will get them physically active. Many of these are outside which can increase the benefits. An active lifestyle helps children thrive physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. Being active in the early years builds positive lifelong habits, and lays the foundation for a healthier, more resilient life.

Sleep Patterns

Research shows that using screens too much, especially before bed, can make it harder to sleep. This is because the blue light from screens and the mental stimulation can interfere with falling asleep.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five encourages parents to create calming bedtime routines, with activities such as sharing books. The 50 Things activities are also an ideal way to prompt families to be active during the day. When children have been active during the day they often fall asleep more quickly and experience deeper sleep.

The Ability to Control Emotions and Impulse

Excessive screen usage can impair emotional comprehension, promote aggressive behaviour, and hinder social and emotional competence.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five provides families with screen free activity ideas to fill their days. Playful activities are a powerful way to help children develop essential emotional and social skills, giving children the tools they need to thrive in group environments, build trust, and navigate life's ups and downs. Play can help children return to balance after an upset, for example, sensory play (e.g., with sand, water, or playdough) has a calming effect.

Eye Health

Spending too much time looking at screens is causing more children to become nearsighted. In 1990, about 1 in 4 children were nearsighted, but by 2023 that number had grown to over 1 in 3 - and it's expected to keep rising.

50 Things to Do Before You're Five encourages families to go outside and play. Letting children play outdoors for at least 1.5 to 2 hours a day is one of the simplest, most effective ways to help prevent or slow the progression of myopia (nearsighted). This outdoor play encourages distance focusing, which is healthier for eye development. Outdoor light also stimulates the release of dopamine in the retina, which helps regulate the growth of the eyeball.