

Technology and Young Children

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Long before a baby is born, technology impacts its life. From the sonogram that gives us the first visual connection to our baby to the fetal monitor that helps deliver that baby safely into our arms, technology plays a role. But like a well-sharpened knife that can help prepare a beautiful healthy meal, it can also cut your finger. And although technology is not inherently good or bad, it's incredibly seductive to both adults and the children in their care. The first step in managing our new world is just being aware of all the ways technology impacts our children's lives. Then we can have a conversation and make intentional choices about how to use it responsibly.

TECHNOLOGY	POSITIVE IMPACT	NEGATIVE IMPACT
BABY MONITOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Keeps baby safe ◆ Lets you hear your baby's voice and babbling, singing, and talking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Thinking your child doesn't need you because he's not crying. Playful awake time is the optimal learning time!
TOY WITH ELECTRONIC MELODY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use <i>with</i> your baby, move from side to side to encourage eye tracking, and following sound ◆ talk with baby while using 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Toys always just left with baby to discover on his own. Although baby will respond to sound, it's really just sound- not "music."
ELECTRONIC TOYS FOR BABIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Play with baby, showing them how to push a button to make lights or sound work, getting excited when baby does it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Showing baby once how toy works, then leaving baby to play on his own
CELL PHONE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Minimal use, especially when it comes to texting! Children need and want to hear your voice! ◆ Talking on the phone instead of texting. Just hearing your voice gives your child a wealth of information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Continually texting or watching the screen ◆ When children talk to parents while they are texting there is little or no eye contact and minimal oral language being shared.
APPS ON MOBILE DEVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Using apps that teach letters, numbers, patterns, or "finding" games ◆ Sitting next to your child and offering comments as he plays "Wow! You found the square!" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Using the "Passback Effect." Passing electronic devices to your children to simply keep them busy. Of course there will be times when this is necessary, but shouldn't be the norm.
I-PADS, TABLETS E-READERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Great for answering questions that come up when the child is most curious "Where do the ants live?" ◆ There are great apps for learning, and interactive e-books ◆ You can make your own E-books from family photos, using free or inexpensive apps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Simple repetitive games that only require a child to keep doing the same motion to get points and play again. ◆ Games for imaginary play that have limited choices ◆ Using regularly just to keep the child occupied
DVD's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Age-appropriate, and occasional. Best shared as a family so you can discuss as you watch. ◆ Used in the car on special occasions, like long car trips- but not as norm. Time in the car is the great conversation time! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Getting into the habit of putting it on whenever you're in the car. Creates distance between you and your child and eliminates one of the best talk times! ◆ Watching so often that child expects (and demands!) a movie.
TELEVISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Limited watching of age-appropriate shows, and with adults as the norm. ◆ Having discussions and watching together can be great for everything from vocabulary to story-telling skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ TV that is on all the time, or more than it is off. ◆ TV in child's room ◆ TV that is unmonitored by adult, with viewing of age-inappropriate shows.
COMPUTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sitting with your child in your lap while looking at digital photos of family and friends, or reading or playing together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sitting a child at a computer putting on a game that requires nothing more than pushing buttons, using as a babysitter.
I-PODS and MUSIC PLAYERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Great for singing and dancing along, and setting or changing a mood! ◆ Music to sleep by is a comforting ritual for many children, allowing them to self-soothe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Volume that is too loud and can damage young ears ◆ Music that's inappropriate for children ◆ Having music on all the time, so that it becomes a white noise and leaves to space for talking or singing