

## EDUCATION

# Technology and Tots - Guidelines for Making “Screen Time” Meaningful

NewsUSA

(NU) - It's a fact: children today are surrounded by all types of digital media from a very young age. Educators, parents and caregivers are left with the task of navigating through a multitude of handheld games, toys and online resources while debating the value of these different options.

Fortunately, research shows that computers can have important benefits for even young children, including language development, literacy development, social development and the development of important problem-solving skills. Here are some guidelines for the use of computers based on both current research in child development and the professional opinions of early childhood educators:

- Stick to a firm time limit for computer use. Recommended time for preschoolers (3-5 years) is 20-30 minutes per day.
- Computers should supplement – and not replace – activities and materials such as art, books, music, outdoor exploration, experimenting with writing materials, dramatic play and socializing with other children.
- Guide and be on hand to help your child, answer questions and interact with your child as she works on the computer.
- Look for online games, resources and Web sites with educational value.

One spot to visit for educational content is PBS KIDS Island ([www.readytolearnreading.org](http://www.readytolearnreading.org)), which provides free research-based reading games and activities for children, parents, caregivers and teachers to use at home or in the classroom. PBS KIDS



**Computers may help your child learn to read.**

Island takes place in a virtual world, where children build an online island by playing games that feature beloved PBS KIDS television characters from award-winning shows, including Sesame Street, Super WHY!, WordWorld, Martha Speaks and Between the Lions. Games allow players to build and practice the critical skills needed to learn to read, like rhyming and letter identification. Parents and teachers are able to access children's accounts to see how far their children have progressed in the game.

The site is an outgrowth of PBS KIDS Raising Readers, a multi-faceted initiative that focuses on using media to help children ages two to eight build reading skills. The initiative is funded in part by a Ready To Learn grant from the U.S. Department of Education, part of a cooperative agreement with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), PBS and The Ready To Learn Partnership. For more information, visit [www.readytolearnreading.org](http://www.readytolearnreading.org).