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Video Game Use Tips to Keep Kids Healthy

o **Be mindful of video game ratings before allowing your child to play them.** The [Entertainment Software Rating Board \(ESRB.org\)](http://ESRB.org) provides details about each game and specifies whether the game is for **Everyone**, **Everyone 10+**, **Teens**, **Mature** or **Adults Only 18+**, **Rating Pending**.

o **Turn off all digital devices a minimum of one hour before bedtime.** The blue light from the screen and the stimulation of playing video games will interfere in your child's ability to fall asleep, critical for healthy development and mental health.

o **Prioritize movement over video game play.** Exercising and engaging in movement will produce many emotional, cognitive, and physical health-related benefits for your child.

o **Do not "binge" video games.** Children who game more than 2 hours per day may experience adverse effects on their mental health, executive function abilities, and low motivation to engage in less stimulating tasks. The more a child games, the less they engage in health-related activities, movement, time with friends & family, creative activities, and imaginary play.

o **Socialize.** Face to face social connection is #1 when it comes to combating depression and anxiety. Social gaming, which means playing with others in a video game, is a crucial factor in contributing to video game overuse and addiction.

- **COVID-19 Recommendations:** Facetime or related applications are approved platforms for all children to engage with those they cannot be with in-person.

o **Playing strategy-based games** for no more than 45 minutes per day enhances cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills. More time gaming may lead to impairments in cognitive functioning, such as diminished concentration and focus on tasks such as academics and life skills.

o **Be mindful about when to introduce video games into your child's life.** [American Academy of Pediatrics](http://AmericanAcademyofPediatrics.org) and digital media treatment experts recommend no online gaming for children and age limits. When gaming is allowed, focus on the pro-social type (increases empathy and responsible behavior), play with them, and talk about what they learned!

