



Grandparenting Screen Kids is the perfect resource for any grandparent who is concerned about screen time. This guide will help you understand this different world of iPads, YouTube and video games. Technology isn't going anywhere and your grandkids need you more than ever to teach them what computers can't.

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The Superhero of the Toy Kingdom

What can I do when my grandchild just wants to use their tablet all day?

Where do we start? Kids have so many digital distractions these days—as we’re sure you’ve noticed. There is something powerful competing with you for your grandchild’s attention. It’s not a brownie straight from the oven or a basketball waiting to be bounced. It’s an iPad, or other brand of tablet. And it’s the superhero of the toy kingdom. That slim rectangle is the gateway to so many adventures. It makes other activities look lame in comparison.

Perhaps you remember a time your grandchildren

came to visit before screens took over. You read books and colored. You made popcorn and then watched a movie together. Visits look different now. Your grandchild wants one thing more than anything else: time to play on the iPad.

What makes the iPad so alluring, anyway? The tablet has been painstakingly designed to engage your grandson or granddaughter with an endless adrenaline drip of excitement and entertainment. Our brains are drawn to intermittent, unexpected rewards—and that's exactly what this device constantly provides. Remember that excited feeling of going to the mailbox because there might be a letter for you inside? That's what it is like when your grandchild starts using the iPad. Surprises await, and the brain craves that hit of dopamine, the hormone associated with pleasure.

Did you have a favorite television show when you were a child? You had to wait for a certain time each week to watch. There were commercials, and way back you couldn't mute or fast-forward through them. You couldn't tape it. The show ended after thirty or sixty minutes. Maybe you didn't like the

next show, so it was easy to turn off the TV and go do something else. The iPad doesn't provide stopping points like this, but offers a continuous stream of new and exciting things to watch, almost commercial-free. *You* have to create the interruptions, or else your grandkids will just keep watching.

NANA'S HOUSE IS DIFFERENT

Maybe you've seen the following slogans on decorative signs with Nana's house rules:

Grandkids welcome

Parents by appointment

Endless hugs and kisses

Laugh—Giggle—Snuggle

Kitchen open twenty-four hours

Eat cookies, tell stories

You've probably never seen slogans like "Unlimited video games" or "Stare at your device for hours" on a sign. That's not the connection and fun associated with going to Nana and Papa's house. You can craft your own house rules whether your grandchild

visits occasionally or all day every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Make your home distinctive, reflecting the values that are important to you. You don't have to cater to your grandkids' pleas for video games or more tablet time. Your house can provide a totally different experience from the norm. That difference is both doable and desirable.

If you are having a hard time wrangling the iPad away from your toddler or teenager, try one of these solutions:

iPad Zones—Have particular zones in the home where the iPad is allowed and other zones where it is off limits. Some tablet-free zones that come to mind are around the dinner table, the kitchen, the backyard, bedrooms, and bathrooms.

iPad Hours—You can post operating hours on a piece of paper such as “iPads allowed between 11 a.m. and noon.”

iPad Naptime—With younger kids, you can tell them that their tablet needs a nap. You can fold a cloth napkin to create a little bed. Cover up the iPad, read it a story, and let it lie dormant for a few hours.

iPad Check—Copy the coat check service at the

theatre. Upon entering your home, your grandchild can check in his or her device. You can place it in your closet for safekeeping and even issue a little ticket to claim it later (which would be fun for younger kids).

Before you begin a new routine for iPad use during visits, have a chat with your grandchildren about the new rules, preferably over some ice cream. Your grandkids may not embrace these new rules. In fact, they will probably throw a fit at some point! Stand firm, however, with your boundaries, and before long, they will become the new normal at Nana and Papa's house.

By the way, you may need to begin a new routine for *your* screen use as well. If you are asking your grandchildren to trade their video games for books, but you are constantly answering text messages and scrolling through news sites, that will not go unnoticed.

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BUT WHAT CAN WE DO INSTEAD?

Creative bloggers have written about “money-free” weekends, coming up with lists of free family activities. How about a “tablet-free” weekend (or weekdays) for you to enjoy more quality moments with your grandchildren? You know about activities like drawing, coloring, board games, reading stories, dancing, singing, playing dress-up, and blowing bubbles. Here are some additional ideas to replace iPad time with something much richer:

Go on a nature walk. Before you head out, make a list of things to find like a green leaf, a rock bigger than a shoebox, a robin, etc. Let your grandchildren know that walking is really good for your health as a grandparent, so the more nature walks you take together, the better.

Visit the library. The library is a forgotten treasure. Check out books regularly and keep them at your house. Pick books for yourself so your grandchild sees your interest in reading as well. Once your grandchild has a favorite author, you can search for that author in the library’s catalog and reserve those books for future visits. If your grandchild has a spe-

cial interest like science or travel, he or she can explore those too. It's a great feeling to walk up to the "hold" shelf and see a desired book waiting there for you.

Chalk drawing contest. Have the grandkids head outside to the sidewalk and have a chalk drawing contest. The parents can decide on the winner or, to add a community twist, you can ask your neighbor to act as the judge.

Visit a fire station. Many fire stations welcome visitors. Call before stopping by and inquire about a short tour. Who knows? They may let your grandchild spray the fire hose or climb into the fire truck.

Hide-and-seek. Hide-and-seek is more humorous when grandparents participate! You may have to adapt the pace and hiding places (you may not be able to crawl under the desk anymore). But no doubt your grandkids will have more fun if you play too.

Family album day. Take out your old photo albums to show your grandkids your siblings and family members. Share some funny memories about your childhood. Write a few letters or draw some pictures together for the family members pictured. What

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a treat it would be for an aunt or uncle to receive a drawing or letter from your grandchild!

Lego building contest. This can take place over a few visits if the kids want to build something elaborate. They can also team up to build a Lego scene together to reveal to their parents. The Lego creation can be kept under a sheet until it's complete. Unveil it with great pomp and circumstance.

Bake something together. What beats the fragrance of cookies or cupcakes baking in the oven? Not much! Have your grandkids help with measuring out the flour, mixing the ingredients, scooping out the dough, even frosting. ("Scraping the bowl" allowed!)

Build an ice castle. Fill up a bunch of ice cube trays and Popsicle trays the night before your grandkids visit. Or better yet, they can fill the trays if they see you more than once a week. When the ice cubes are ready, pop out the ice and build an ice castle outside. If it's hot, the castle will melt quickly but it will feel so nice and cool on the skin. If it's wintertime, that ice castle might last for days.

NO TABLET CAN TEACH LIFE SKILLS

Jerry is a father and grandfather who did some everyday errands in an unusually clever way. He would purposefully take his grandchildren to the grocery store not to shop but to learn *how* to shop. “Here’s how you pick a good apple,” he would say to his eight-year-old grandson. “This is a cheap price for chicken,” he would point out to his ten-year-old granddaughter. He wanted his grandkids to know how to shop for themselves when they were older.

Jerry would do the same thing at the bank, explaining how to use the ATM machine, demonstrating a transaction with the bank teller, and showing them how to write a check. Perhaps more than ever, kids need practical training on these kinds of life skills. If you have a teen grandchild, you may be the best person to help that girl or boy learn how to drive. You may have the time and you definitely have the experience. Hours behind the wheel together will become a sacred space for conversation—and perhaps prayer!

Your teen grandchild may appear to be much more interested in using an iPad or phone, but you have so much more to offer. You can:

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Teach your grandchild how to prepare five meals. Most young people know how to order food on their phones, but they don't know anything about cooking themselves. You can gift them with the ability to prepare five meals. When they make those meals in a tiny apartment far from home for the first time, they will be thinking of you.

Run through a mock job interview. Have your grandchild dress up for the interview and you can give feedback on their appearance. Pretend to be the person responsible for the hiring, ask relevant questions, and then give your suggestions. Insist on eye contact and keep practicing the conversation until he or she is comfortable and confident.

Practice phone skills. Many kids lean into texting and emailing, but they are mortified to make a voice call. They even avoid ordering pizza over the phone. Practice talking on the phone during their visits. Let them know it's for the purpose of getting comfortable with talking on the phone, not because you want the phone out all the time.

Ask your grandchild to be your personal trainer. My (Arlene's) parents, who are in their seventies, need

to exercise more, but they don't enjoy going to the gym. So my kids go over to their house and exercise with them from time to time. "Come on, Nana," Ethan will say, "give me twenty-five more leg raises and then we'll take a break." Your grandkids can help you get healthier and learn the skill of coaching in the process.

The presence of tablets may be new and pervasive, but never underestimate your presence as a grandparent. Your love is more powerful than pixels and cute cat videos. Don't give up on establishing and enforcing restrictions with your grandchild's iPad. The more they have your undivided attention, the less they will crave the electronic thrills of the iPad.

Parental Controls

Working with your adult children, you can use parental controls to set content and privacy restrictions on the iPad or other tablet.

- Go to Settings and tap Screen Time.

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- Tap Content & Privacy Restrictions.
- From here, you can limit:
 - Music (clean or explicit)
 - Movies and TV shows (based on ratings)
 - Apps (based on age)
 - Web content (limit adult websites)
 - Multiplayer games (allow or don't allow)

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