Family FAQ

Q: Are all screens bad?

A: Regardless of the quality of media, there is no denying that, for most children today, time spent with screens overwhelms all other leisure activities — and that too much screen time is harmful. One of the purposes of Screen-Free Week is to leave behind judgments about the quality of programming and focus instead on creating, discovering, building, participating, and doing.

Q: Instead of taking screens away from kids, don't we need to teach kids media literacy?

A: It's not either/or. In fact, Screen-Free Week is an important part of media literacy. After all, rule one in media literacy is knowing when to turn it off. Media literate kids (and adults) have broad interests and experiences that they can use to interpret the media they consume. Giving children the chance to play actively, develop relationships, and learn to evaluate options will help them become more well-rounded people, better educated citizens, more alert consumers—and be far more media literate.

Q: My spouse/partner won't participate. Now what?

A: Screen-Free Week is voluntary and meant to be fun. Encourage your spouse to give it a try. It's best if Screen-Free Week is a family activity. But if that's not possible, encourage your spouse or partner to respect the choices that you and your children are making by avoiding screen time in front of the kids during the week.

Q: I need some peace and quiet when I come home. How do I occupy the kids while I fix dinner or do things around the house?

A: Developing a few regular pre-dinner activities for children is a worthwhile investment. Some parents find that playing with kids for a few minutes helps everyone relax. You can also encourage kids to keep you company while you're cooking. They can help with simple tasks, read aloud, or talk about their day. Some families keep art materials or small toys in the kitchen to keep children occupied during dinner prep. Consider brainstorming with other parents about what they do. Find our Screen-Free Week community on Facebook, post tips from your own experience, pose questions about your stumbling blocks, or just chat with like-minded Screen-Free celebrators.

Q: How can we best appeal to teenagers?

A: Make it fun and provocative. Prepare for the week by stimulating discussion on screen-time issues or debating opposing views. See if Screen-Free Week organizers or local businesses (bookstores, bowling alleys, recreation centers, etc.) are offering discounts to students, families, and individuals who show a signed Screen-Free Week "Pledge Card." Arrange family outings and outdoor activities, such as bike rides, hikes, sports, gardening, and camping, or try an art class or catch a show at a local theater.