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Technology and Children

Technology has been influencing the way we live our lives for the past few decades. One of the most noticeable impact that technology brings is in the way that children play and learn. Undoubtedly, there are many positive benefits of technology for learning, but it can also have several negative effects on child development and quality of life.



The Negative Sides of Technology

Due to excessive usage of technology, children today don't get as much exercise as they used to. Computers, smartphones and television encourages them to stay put as opposed to going outside and playing.

Kids also do not experience the benefits of spending time outdoors when they are reliant on technology for entertainment. One of the benefits of outdoor activity is the exposure to sunlight, which will supply the body with Vitamin D, and regular exposure helps keep sleep cycle normal by influencing body's production of melatonin. Research has shown that sleep is disturbed due to suppression of melatonin from exposure to excessive harmful blue light that some phones emit.

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Technology changes the way kids socialize and interact with each other. Usage of technology lower children's frequency of interacting with their peers. Children will find it more difficult to pick up social cues and develop meaningful relationships with others. Technology also impacts emotional development as they do not have enough time being engaged while in the presence of others.



Children also loses the ability to focus when given excessive exposure to technology. Technology is full of stimuli and often requires paying attention to various things at once. Children who plays excessive video games, or those who spend most of their time online, tend to have less of an ability to focus than kids who use minimal technology. Information processing can also be affected. Kids tend to think through things superficially and don't develop the ability to think critically or be creative when learning new concepts.



Benefits of Technology

This is not to say that technology is all bad, or that children should never use technology. With the correct environment, and intermixed with a range of other activities such as reading and exercise, technology usage can be beneficial. Technology provides opportunities for learning, entertaining and socializing but it should be monitored and used appropriately.

Engaging applications will allow children to develop better hand-eye coordination further. Educational applications or games require children to follow objects and interact with them. This will help hand eye coordination and improve understanding of how to interact with the systems. For example, they will learn that pressing the right button on the screen will invoke certain actions. Hand-eye coordination is vital when the children begin school when they learn how to use their hands and eyes while writing and drawing.

At a young age, usage of technology also help children develop language skills. By accessing stories online or by simply reading the instructions found in their favourite apps, they learn new words and proper ways to pronounce them. Children have a strong sense of curiosity for understanding how to maneuver the software that they are using. One of the ways that parents can facilitate this is by providing picture dictionary or flashcards for them to boost their vocabulary and teach them to search for meanings when they come across unfamiliar word.

Other than that, usage of technology increases the motivation to complete tasks. Many games and computer activities are created to encourage children to complete a level in order to unlock the next level. This will teach children to overcome challenges and constantly keep trying which they can apply outside the screen setting.

Research also suggested that younger children are more interested in the short-term goals of games. These short-term goals are essential in developing problem solving. When playing a game, the children are indirectly trained to think of the next logical steps to win. Other than that, they are also being trained to think of the consequences of their actions in any of the game. This is helpful, especially in Math and Logical Reasoning, which will indirectly affects their learning in school.

Parental Tips for Technology Usage

As stated here, there are many benefits in introducing technology to children at an early age. However, excessive usage can also bring more harm than good. The following are some of the tips for parents to use to monitor their children’s technological usage.



1. *Set limits and encourage playtime.*

Like all other activities, usage of technology should also have reasonable limits. Creativity at an early age are best stimulated through unstructured and offline play. Make playtime with the children a daily priority, either by encouraging outdoor play, setting up play dates, or by signing up children to a self-defence class.

2. *Encourage face-to-face communication.*

At a young age, children learn best through two-way communication. Engaging in back and forth conversation with the children is critical for language development. Research has shown that back-and-forth conversation improves language skills much more than passive listening or one-way interaction with the screen. For those who are constantly travelling, an example of how to encourage interaction is by video chatting with the kids.

3. *Technology should not be used as an emotional pacifier.*

Games, cartoons and other media usage can be effective in keeping kids calm and quiet, but it should not be the only way to keep the children calm. At a very young age, encourage the children to identify and handle strong emotions. Teach children to come out with activities to manage boredom, to talk of ways to solve the problems, to calm down through breathing or to find other strategies for channelling emotions.

4. *Create tech-free zones.*

Every parents should have a technology free zone, a timeline or a space where usage of technology will be off limits to the children. An example will be during family mealtime, or during a family and social gatherings, or inside the bedroom.

Test your Brain!

The Lily Pad Problem



In a lake, there is a patch of lily pads. Every day, the patch doubles in size. If it takes 48 days for the patch to cover the entire lake, how long would it take for the patch to cover half of the lake?

The tempting answer here is 24, but you are wrong if that is your final answer!

The Answer: The patch would reach half the size of the lake on day 47.

Explanation: With all the talk of doubling and halves, your brain jumps to the conclusion that to solve the problem of when the lily patch covers half the lake, all you have to do is divide the number of days it took to fill the lake (48) in half. It's understandable but wrong.

The problem says that the patch **DOUBLES** in size every day, which means that on any day, the lily patch was half the size the day before. So if the patch reaches the entire size of the lake on the 48th day, it means the lily pad was half the size of the lake on day 47.

5 Memory Facts!

1. Human brain starts remembering thing from the womb, 20 weeks after conception.
2. Storage capacity of the brain is limitless.
3. Memory loss is not associated with aging. As we get older, we tend to exercise our brains lesser compared to when we were younger.
4. Smell can trigger memory in your mind and you can associate a scent with a certain events or occurrences.
5. We are likely to remember the information that is provided if it is in a weird, difficult-to-read font.

Upcoming Event!



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