Khan Academy Kids

Managing Screen Time, Together

A Family Engagement Night Curriculum — Facilitator Guide

Overview

- **Time:** 45–60 minutes, adjustable by trimming the small-group activities.
- **Audience:** Parents, families, and guardians of PreK–2nd grade students. Works for a single classroom or a whole-school event.
- **Goal:** Help families move from counting screen minutes to evaluating screen quality, and send every family home with a plan they'll actually use.
- **Materials:** Printed "Our Screen Plan" worksheets (one per family), printed Screen "Nutrition Label" checklists, chart paper or a whiteboard, and if possible, a phone or tablet with 2–3 familiar kids' apps loaded for the live demo in Section 6.
- **Room setup:** Rounds of 6–10 chairs work best for the small-group sections. A single large circle works too — just plan for whole-group discussion instead of table groups.

Open the Family Engagement Night slide template

Agenda at a Glance

Time	Section	Length
0:00	Welcome & icebreaker	5 min
0:05	Why "minutes" aren't enough	8 min
0:13	Screen time at school	4 min
0:17	The 3-question screen check	8 min
0:25	Green flags, red flags	7 min
0:32	The AAP's 5 C's framework	8 min
0:40	Activity: build your family's screen plan	10 min
0:50	Live demo: the screen "nutrition label"	8 min
0:56	Closing commitments & resources	6 min

1. Welcome & Icebreaker (5 minutes)

"Turn to the person next to you and share one screen-time battle you've had this week. You have 90 seconds — go."

After the pair share, ask for two or three volunteers to share out loud. This does two things: it gets the room talking immediately, and it tells every caretaker in the room they're not the only one dealing with this.

Facilitator note: Keep this light and fast. The goal is energy and recognition, not problem-solving yet — that comes later.

2. Why "Minutes" Aren't Enough (8 minutes)

In the past, "screen time" mostly meant TV. Now it can mean videos that autoplay, games with rewards and pop-ups, apps that track what kids tap, and feeds that keep recommending more.

- Some screens are built for learning and calm. Others are built to keep kids watching. Time matters, but quality matters more.

"Instead of asking 'How much?', we're going to ask 'What, how, and what's missing?'"

Not All Screen Time Is Built the Same

- **Better for young kids:** Clear learning goal, no ads, clear stopping points, child-centered design, safe privacy.
- **Higher risk:** Autoplay, endless scroll, push alerts, targeted ads, "recommended for you" rabbit holes.

Look for clear endings. Endings make stopping easier — that's one of the simplest, most effective changes a family can make.

3. Screen time at School (4 minutes)

Facilitator note: Include this section if your school has fielded questions or pushback about classroom screen use, from a specific parent, a broader community concern, or wider news coverage on the topic. If this hasn't come up for your families, feel free to skip it and reclaim the 4 minutes elsewhere.

"You might be wondering why we use screens in the classroom at all, especially with everything you're hearing about screen time these days."

Here's the distinction we hold ourselves to:

- **It's purposeful, not filler.** Every app or tool we use is tied to a specific skill we're teaching — not something to fill five minutes while we take attendance.
- **A teacher is part of it.** Your child isn't handed a tablet and left alone. We're circulating, asking questions, and connecting what's on the screen to what we're doing in the rest of the lesson.
- **It's one tool among many.** Screens sit alongside books, manipulatives, and hands-on activities — they don't replace them.

"If you ever want to see exactly what your child uses in our classroom and why, just ask. I'm glad to walk you through it."

Facilitator note: This is a good moment to name that the same 3-Question Check families are about to learn is the same lens you apply to what comes into your own classroom—it reinforces that this isn't a double standard.

4. The 3-Question Screen Check (8 minutes)

This is the single tool we want every family to leave with tonight. Use it on any show, app, or game.

- **Content — what is it?** Is it made for ages 2–8? Is it teaching something real? Are there ads, weird links, or pressure to buy?
- **Context — how is it used?** Is the child just watching, or doing something — talking, choosing, creating? Is a grown-up nearby sometimes?
- **Crowd-out — what's it replacing?** Is it pushing out sleep, play, books, meals, or people time? What is it replacing?

"When content is good and kids are supported, screens can help. When screens push out the basics, it's time to change the plan."

Facilitator note: Consider a quick pair discussion here: have each table pick one app their kids use and run it through the three questions out loud.

5. Green Flags, Red Flags (7 minutes)

Green Flags: Signs Screens Are Helping

- Active: kids answer, move, solve, sing, create.
- Age-right: made for young kids, not older kids or adults.
- Clear stopping points: easy to end.
- Grown-up friendly: settings and controls.
- Fits around basics: sleep, play, and people time still happen every day.

Red Flags: Signs It's Time to Adjust

- Big meltdowns when it's time to stop.
- More irritability or "zoned out" time.
- Sleep gets worse.
- Less interest in toys, books, and outside play.
- Screens take over routines like meals, mornings, or bedtime.

None of this calls for panic. It calls for a tweak: shorten the session, turn off autoplay, pick calmer content, add a clear stopping point, or add a screen-free anchor like meals or bedtime.

6. The AAP's 5 C's Framework (8 minutes)

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers a simple framework for thinking through any screen decision. Walk through each 'C' with the room.

- **Child:** What helps this kid, specifically? Not every child needs the same plan.
- **Content:** Is it high quality and age-right?
- **Calm:** Are screens the main way your child calms down? If so, that's worth watching.
- **Crowding out:** What gets pushed out when the screen is on?
- **Communication:** Talk about what your child watched or played — this turns passive time into shared time.

7. Activity: Build Your Family's Screen Plan (10 minutes)

Hand out the "Our Family Screen Plan" worksheet. Give families 7–8 minutes to fill it out together (or individually, if attending solo), then invite 2–3 to share.

- What's our screen purpose right now?
- What's our stopping point — one story, two activities, or a set time?
- What do we say when it's time to stop?
- What are our screen-free anchors — meals, bedtime, mornings?
- What's the next activity after screen time — snack, outside play, drawing?

Facilitator note: This is the emotional high point of the night. Give it real time and don't rush the share-out — hearing another parent's stopping-point script is often more useful than anything in this guide.

8. Live Demo: The Screen "Nutrition Label" (8 minutes)

If you have a phone or tablet, pull up one or two apps families commonly mention and score them live against the checklist. This makes the tool concrete instead of abstract.

- No ads, no autoplay or endless feed, clear lessons with clear endings, grown-up controls, kid-safe privacy, active learning, calm pace.
- 5–7 checks: great pick. 3–4 checks: use with support and short sessions. 0–2 checks: worth considering a different option.

Facilitator note: If you don't have a device handy, this works just as well as a paper exercise — hand out the checklist and have families score an app from memory.

9. Closing Commitments & Resources (6 minutes)

Close by asking each family to pick just one next step for the week ahead. Small and specific beats big and vague.

- Turn off autoplay.
- Add bookends: one story, or two activities.
- Choose one screen-free anchor.
- Ask one check-in question after screen time.

"You've got this. The goal was never 'no screens.' The goal is better screens, used in better ways."

Send families home with their completed Screen Plan, the Screen “Nutrition Label” checklist, and the list of free resources below.

- Khan Academy blog: Healthy Screen Time for Young Kids
- HealthyChildren.org: AAP digital world guidance and the 5 C's
- American Academy of Pediatrics: pediatrics policy statement on media use

And if families are looking for a free, ad-free app that's built around these same principles, Khan Academy Kids is 100% free, safe, and ad-free — screen time you can feel good about.

Appendix: Discussion Starters for Facilitators

Use these anywhere in the night the room goes quiet, or to seed the small-group conversations above. Each is designed to invite a story, not a yes/no answer.

Opening the conversation

- What does a typical screen moment look like in your house on a school night versus a weekend?
- What's one show, app, or game your child could use all day if you let them? What do you think it gives them?

On quality vs. quantity

- Think of an app or show your child uses. Would you say it's more 'built for kids' or 'built for clicks'? What tipped you off?
- Has your child ever asked to keep watching or playing right after something ended on its own? What was different about that app?

On stopping points and transitions

- What's the hardest part of ending screen time in your house — the ask, the actual stop, or what comes right after?
- Has anyone found a stopping-point phrase or routine that actually works? What made it stick?

On the 5 C's

- Which of the 5 C's feels most relevant to your family right now — content, calm, crowding out, communication, or the child themselves?
- When your child is upset, how often is a screen the first calming tool reached for? Is that working?

Closing reflection

- What's one small change you're willing to try this week? What would make it easier to actually stick to?

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