



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by LifeBalance Solutions



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Children and Digital Media

The benefits of digital media can be great if used moderately and appropriately, but according to research, time with family and friends plays an even more important role in promoting children's learning and healthy development.

Here are some tips to help you manage your children's use of digital media at home.

- Apply the same parenting guidelines to both real and virtual environments.
- Set limits and encourage play time. Tech use should have reasonable limits. Make unplugged playtime a daily priority in order to stimulate creativity.
- Encourage social interaction, bonding and learning. Involve the entire family in media activities.
- Be a good role model. Limit your own media use.
- Value face-to-face communication. Research has shown that "back-and-forth conversation" improves language skills more than "passive" listening or one-way interaction with a screen.
- Create tech-free zones. Keep family mealtimes and bedrooms tech-free.



- Don't use technology as an emotional pacifier. Teach children how to identify and handle strong emotions and come up with activities to manage their own boredom.
- Do your homework on apps for kids. Look to organizations like Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org) for reviews about age-appropriate apps.

Sources: <http://families.naeyc.org/children-and-digital-media-tips-american-academy-pediatrics#sthash.qmncrwiD.dpuf>.

Parenting Preemies

A premature baby is one who is born before 37 weeks. Premature babies may have more health problems and may need to stay in the hospital longer than babies born later. In addition to the stress this puts on the baby to "catch-up" in development, it can cause many emotional and financial worries for the whole family.

Premature babies may require special attention. Some things to think about when caring for a preemie:

- **Create a quiet environment.** Preemies need quiet, calm environments so that they can grow and develop.
- **Take extra care to help calm and soothe your baby.** Preemies tend to have a harder time learning to calm themselves and developing the early forms of self-control.
- **Begin pumping as soon after the birth as possible.** Even if your baby cannot nurse right away, you can work with your baby's doctor to see if the milk can be given to your baby or you can freeze it for later.
- **Talk to your baby, interact and hold him, read stories to him, play and sing songs.** All of these recommendations given to help a full-term baby still apply to encouraging the development of a

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If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or go to www.helpmegrowmn.org



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Creating Literacy-Rich Homes

A literacy-rich home is a home environment that encourages children to become lifelong readers. Families can support language learning by creating an environment in which reading, writing, and talking are a natural part of daily life.

Parents can do lots of things at home to encourage reading. Reading aloud to your children is only one of them. Another is setting aside regular time for family reading, even just 10-15 minutes a day. Setting a good example by letting your children see you reading, can be very helpful.

Literacy development begins in infancy and books are a key ingredient. Try these tips for creating a literacy-rich home:

- Establish a regular time and place for reading.
- Have lots of reading materials all over the house; books, atlases, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries.



- Share the love of books and reading. Tell your child what your favorite book was when you were a child.
- Discuss books with your children. Encourage children to think about the characters, setting, and problem. Can they predict what will happen next?
- Have plenty of paper and writing tools where children can reach them.
- Model reading and writing for pleasure.

Source: "Creating Literacy-Rich Homes," Rochester City School District, <http://www.rcsdk12.org>, retrieved February 2016.

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preemie. He just may require more patience and persistence.

In the stress of caring for a pre-term baby, it can be easy to lose sight of personal and family needs, but these needs are also very important.

- **Try to acknowledge your feelings** and others' feelings during this difficult time.
- **Give truthful age-appropriate explanations to siblings about what is happening.** This can be helpful in allowing the child(ren) to understand what is going on and to be okay with feeling sad and scared.
- **Seek support from family and friends, and also reach out to other parents at the hospital.** It can be helpful to talk to a professional counselor about how you are doing with the challenges of the initial birth and parenting of a preemie.
- **Take time to do things you know will help you.** Take a walk or have coffee with a friend. You will be better equipped to handle the needs of your baby if you feel cared for and supported too.

Source: "Parenting Premature Babies: Focus on Development," the Urban Child Institute, <http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/articles/research-to-policy/practice/parenting-premature-babies-focus-on-development>, 2016.

Test Your Knowledge!

- 1) T F A literacy-rich home describes a home environment that encourages children to become lifelong readers.
- 2) T F A premature baby is one who is born before 37 weeks.
- 3) T F There should be no limits set for tech use.



for Families at
<http://bit.ly/solutions-for-families>



The **Getting Ready for Kindergarten** calendar is a great resource for parents and caregivers to help prepare 3, 4, and 5-year-olds for kindergarten. The **2015-16 School Year calendar** is available in **Spanish** for **\$3.00**. For more information visit www.kindergartencalendar.org.

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