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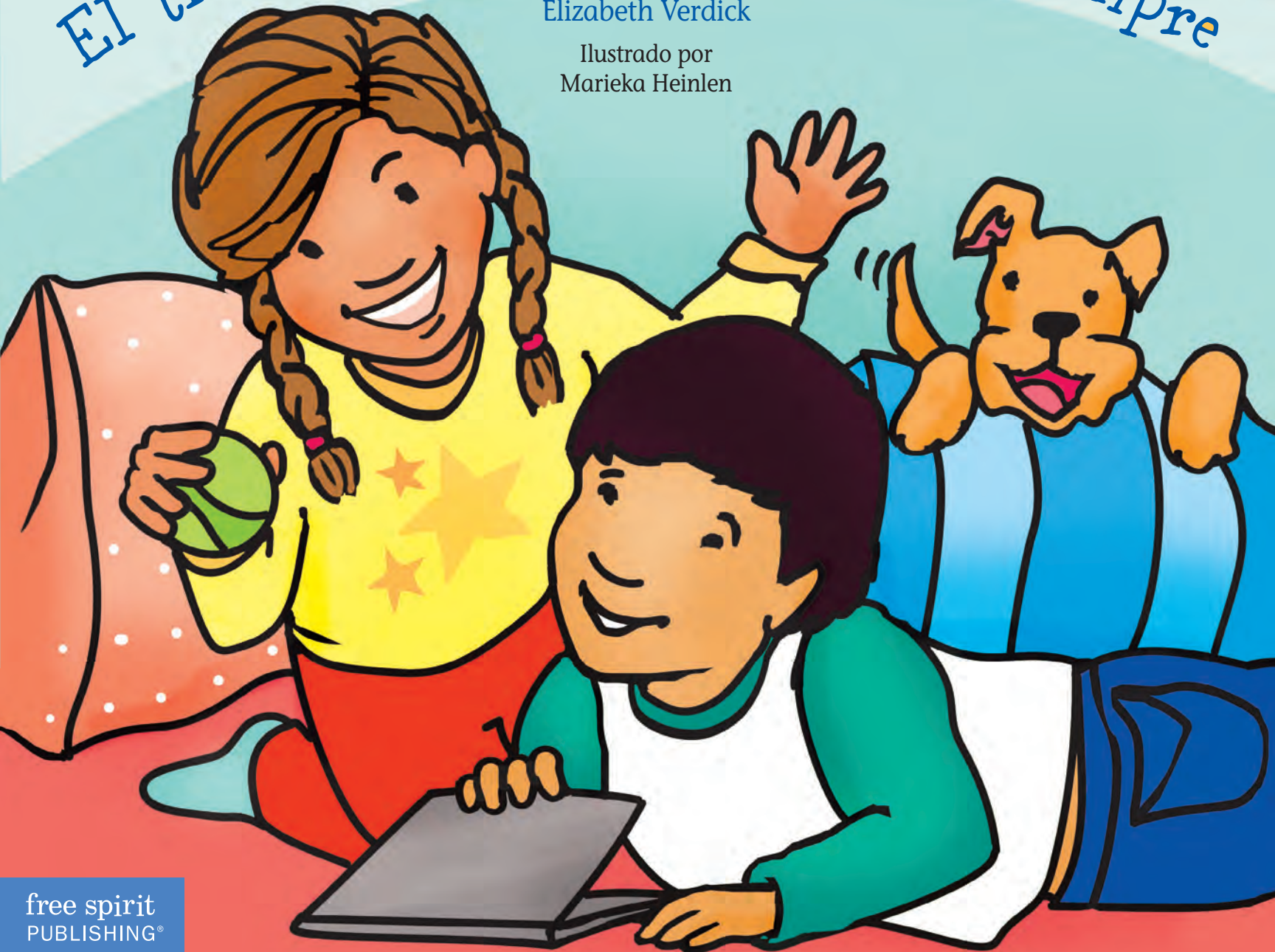
For Ages 4-7  
De 4 a 7 años

# Screen Time Is Not Forever

## El tiempo de pantalla no es para siempre

Elizabeth Verdick

Ilustrado por  
Marieka Heinlen



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free spirit

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*Screen use guidelines and safety rules cited in this book are based on recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, and HealthyChildren.org.*

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For families and educators helping  
kids grow up to be their best selves.  
Thank you for the hard work you do.  
—E.V.

For every family striving to balance the  
innovations of the digital world with the  
vibrant, living world around us.  
—M.H.

A las familias y los educadores que ayudan  
a los niños a crecer para convertirse en la  
mejor versión de sí mismos. Gracias por  
su trabajo y su esfuerzo.  
—E. V.

A todas las familias que luchan por  
encontrar el equilibrio entre las  
innovaciones del mundo digital y el mundo  
vivaz y vibrante que nos rodea.  
—M. H.



How many screens do you see?

¿Cuántas pantallas ves?



*That many?  
¿Tantas?*

Screens help you learn and have fun. So much fun, it's easy to forget the button for "Off."

*Las pantallas te ayudan a aprender y a divertirte. Son tan divertidas que es fácil olvidarse de apretar el botón de "apagar".*



*(Grown-ups forget too!)  
(¡Los adultos también se olvidan!).*

## Tips and Activities for Parents and Caregivers

*Screen Time Is Not Forever* is a teaching tool and a discussion starter for changes you may wish to make at home. When helping kids learn about screen time, we can't simply say, "Turn it off," and then be done. Instead, we can offer a positive spin, one that includes the whole family. As this book says, "Screen time is one little part of your life," and, "Screen time is not forever. Let's spend more time TOGETHER."

### The Thinking Behind Setting Screen-Time Limits

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) encourage these guidelines for children's screen time:

- For children ages 2–5 years, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.
- For children ages 6 and older, place consistent limits on the time spent using media and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity, and other behaviors essential to health.
- Doctors believe that children who have more than the recommended screen time don't get the amount of physical exercise, outdoor play, face-to-face social time, and sleep they truly need. Putting some limits in place is a way to focus on good health.

### Deciding What Works for Your Family

In a perfect world, we could make sure our children follow the recommended screen-time limits each day. But the world is far from perfect—and technology continues to transform aspects of daily life. Guidelines aren't written in stone. After all, what if your young child stays in touch with grandparents through screen time? What if your child is ill and spends a day watching videos? What if your child's school relies on screens for education and connection? Do the guidelines have any meaning then? These are all good questions! Think of the guidelines as a reference point. From there, you decide what works for your family.

**Put real-life experiences first.** Young children rarely get a brain boost from technology. Real-life activities are always better than apps and gadgets. Plan a daily routine that prioritizes exercise, outdoor time, and face-to-face interaction.

**Think "quality over quantity."** On days when it isn't possible to stick with the screen-time guidelines, focus on managing the quality of the media your child consumes. Look for high-quality, educational content, and seek recommendations from reliable sources such as Common Sense Media. If your child is using social media to keep in touch with loved ones, don't worry too much if it takes more than an hour to stay connected. To enhance the quality of your child's screen time, join in yourself.

**Think "safety."** Keep a close eye on the kinds of media your child is exposed to. Research continues to show that children should not be exposed to violent media, sexual content, or video games that focus on shooting guns. You may want to be cautious about the news you watch while children are in the room too. Use the following tips to keep your child "screen safe."

- Put computers and televisions in a busy area.
- Supervise your child's internet use and frequently check the internet browser history.
- Set parental controls and use monitoring and filtering tools as needed.
- Familiarize yourself with social media apps. You may wish to block instant messaging, email, chat rooms, video messaging, and access to message boards.
- Teach your children about privacy. Make sure they never share photos or give out information about themselves or their family when online.
- Encourage your kids to tell you about anything online that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.

**Make a family media plan.** It can help to involve the whole family and use positive language when talking about screen-time restrictions. The [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org) website, from the AAP, has a tool called "Create Your Family Media Plan" that you can use. Another option is to keep things simple by making a screen schedule. Each family is unique, so experiment to find what works best for you, and adjust as needed.

**Create screen-free zones.** Create technology-free zones throughout the home so all family members have places where they know screens stay off. For example, keep meals screen-free. You may also

want to make a rule that children cannot have screens in their bedrooms. Charge tech devices outside of the bedroom overnight to avoid interrupted sleep.

**Find other forms of entertainment or distraction.** Phones and tablets can be an easy way to keep your children occupied, and that's fine when you have to make a meal or talk to another adult. But sometimes, these gadgets are too quick and easy, becoming the first thing kids reach for during moments when you're busy. Provide an alternative source of distraction by having a "go bag" of toys, books, stickers, and art supplies. It's okay for kids to be bored! Boredom can lead to deep thinking, imagining, and closer observation.

**Make screen time interactive.** What's the best way to monitor your child's screen use? Be a part of it! Watch programs or videos together, discussing what you see. Play video games with your child, so you can model how to be a good sport. Don't think of screen time as alone time—make it interactive time.

**Be a screens-off role model.** Once your family plan is in place, keep a daily log of how much time you—and all members of the family—spend on a screen each day. There's no need to fault yourself if you don't all adhere perfectly to the plan, because each week will be different and each day is a new start. Make the plan positive by having other activities available, especially ones that encourage movement and outdoor time. You may want to make a list of fun screens-off activities your family can do, such as board games, art projects, or funny dance contests.