

When Screen Time Is Over

A free printable social story for ages 3-8

Ending screen time is one of the most common meltdown triggers at home and school, because screens are absorbing and the stop feels sudden. This story establishes a predictable shut-off routine with a warning and a next activity. Consistency is everything: use the same countdown language from the story every single time.

Sometimes I watch shows or play games on a screen.

Screens are fun, and my body needs other kinds of play too.

Screen time always ends. That is okay.

A grown-up or a timer tells me when screen time is almost over.

When I hear "five more minutes," I can start finishing up.

When the timer beeps, it is time to turn off the screen.

Stopping can feel hard. Some kids feel mad or sad when screens turn off.

Those feelings are okay, and they get smaller.

I can take a deep breath and hand the screen to my grown-up.

My favorite shows and games will still be there next time.

After screens, I can pick something fun, like blocks, drawing, or playing outside.

When I turn off the screen calmly, I feel proud of myself.

I can say, "Okay," and find my next fun thing.

Tips for Reading This Story Together

- Always give the same warning at the same interval (five more minutes) and follow through exactly when the timer sounds.
- Let a neutral timer be the bad guy; the timer says it is time is easier to accept than a parent's decision.
- Have the next activity visibly ready before the timer goes off so your child moves toward something, not just away from the screen.
- End at natural break points when possible, like the end of an episode or level, and say so in the warning.

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