

## Smart Screen Time

With the proliferation of screen-based activities available for and embraced by youth, KLRU Educational Services has developed a set of guidelines for digital media use called “Smart Screen Time / La Pantalla Inteligente.” In addition to offering quality educational media, KLRU Educational Services staff believe that explicit guidelines for how to use these media has never been more needed – for parents, caretakers, educators, and the children themselves. The guidelines have been incorporated into all of KLRU Educational Services’ messaging and will soon be appearing on-air and online in a series of explanatory video clips. The guidelines are as follows:

- Knowing “smart time” vs. “silly time” - Kids instinctively know when they are viewing or playing media that is cognitively stimulating, and media that is pure entertainment. We believe that there is a role for both in kids’ lives. Adults who provide access to digital media ought to have conversations about the appropriate balance of smart and silly with the children in their care, and help children monitor their own media habits.
- When the brain slows down, turn the screen off! - All viewers of digital media have experienced moments when they are neither asleep nor alert, but in some in-between “zombie” zone. For adults, this may be a reasonable break from a long day’s work. For kids, it’s a different matter because this time is neither truly restful, nor is it meaningfully engaging. In short, it’s lost time during a period of rapid brain growth and development. For that reason, it’s important for adults in kids’ lives to turn the screen off and send them to another activity (including sleep!). Kids can become self-monitors of their own zombie states, and can learn alternatives to drooling in front of a screen.
- Talk throughout the day, including during screen time - Studies have shown that dialogue can enhance the learning outcomes of using educational digital media. Look no further than our own characters to see role models for our kids – our characters use sophisticated vocabulary, ask good questions, and seek solution pathways for desired information. In short, they are all chatterboxes! Adults can ask kids for narrative summaries of show episodes, or to describe strategies they are using to advance in games.
- Watch and play on screens together - This is corollary of guideline #3. Whereas dialogue about kids’ viewing or playing is great, an even stronger learning experience occurs when adults and kids engage together with educational media. KLRU Educational Services selects PBS evening programs each month for “Family Choice” viewing, when we encourage generations to sit, watch, and discuss together. This idea can be extended to our programming throughout the day, and to game-playing online and on mobile media.
- Read both at home and at school – every day! As proud as we are of the educational quality of our media, KLRU Educational Services recognizes that reading remains the most efficient, effective method of acquiring new information, building vocabulary, and experiencing new worlds of learning. In fact, a good number of our programs and games explicitly steer children to reading experiences. Most children still need adults to bridge the gap from screen to text, and to help them locate appropriate reading materials. This cannot solely occur in school – children who practice literacy as a desired activity during out-of-school time have markedly better learning outcomes that endure throughout their lives. We know our job is done when kids instinctively and enthusiastically turn from our media to books as a logical next step in their learning lives.

