

# Mum, where is my iPad?

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“Mum, where’s my iPad?” A frequent yell from the top of the stairs in my house. The answer, it is hidden away, part of my endless attempt to control screen time. The iPad, in fact, is mine, but somewhere along the way, my tech savvy five-year-old has laid claim to it. It is now crammed full of Barbie games, random pictures of the carpet in her room and her very favourite thing, the Sky Kids App.

The debate around kids and screen time is constant, often with several conflicting views. This was evidenced by the reaction of the media in the UK to a WHO report published in April. The report recommended that children from age two to five should not spend any

more than an hour on a screen a day. The UK media reported that several paediatricians disagreed with the WHO claims as they were based on poor evidence. I am a media buyer not a doctor, so I am not here to give you my recommendations on how many hours a day to let your kids sit with their screens. What I wanted to share is my observations about the way my five-year-old is using her iPad and why I think that this makes it such an appealing platform for younger kids.

As I mentioned, her favourite thing on the iPad is the Sky Kids App. She likes the games, but she uses it mostly to watch her favourite programmes. We have a giant TV on the wall in the living room yet, there she is, staring at a tiny screen and loving doing it. She becomes completely lost in her own little world. It isn't that she doesn't like watching TV, she loves it. There has even been a request to Santa this year for a guitar, so she can learn to play like her favourite TV show character Vampirina. What makes the iPad so appealing to her is the ability to be able to pick the programmes she wants to watch, by herself. The big set on the wall in the living room doesn't give her the same control her little iPad screen does. She has only just started to learn to read, so the written TV guide on the screen is a mystery to her. She can't go into it and read where Disney channel is and has to rely on one of us to tell her what is on or, in most cases, select something for her. Hand her the Sky Kids app though and suddenly, she is free. She can identify the logos of the channels and only has to hit the picture icon of her favourite show and it starts. I feel comfortable with giving her this control as well as I know the content in that environment, is suitable for her to be watching.

This element of control makes the small screen very appealing. In a world where adults make most of your decisions, being able to make choices about the TV content you watch is a big thing for kids. It is no secret that kids' TV ratings are in decline, but if the evidence from my house is anything to go by, kids TV is far from dying off. They still enjoy watching programmes, they just choose to do it in a different way so that they can decide what they want to watch. Again, this is nothing new but as advertisers looking to increase reach on campaigns where ratings are falling, it is certainly something to be mindful of in our media planning.

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