

A Volunteer's Guide to ...

Talking About Technology



with Preschoolers

"I'm going to put my technology in this basket while we are together so that I can focus on you."

"What could we try to calm down when we are sad or mad?"

"Do you want some headphones to make it not so loud?"

"Is the toy too loud or bright? Maybe we can turn that part off or find something else to play with."

"When the Alexa nightlight changes color, we can know our parents are on the way so we can clean up!"

"Should we eat our snack while we watch our video today?"

"Let's play some music and move our bodies to the beat!"

"Let's turn down the lights as we get ready to read our story."

"Let's turn on the bubbles to help us relax and play together!"

"Can you help me pick which song we should listen to?"



How to Talk About Technology

By around age four, most children are able to learn equally well from interactive media as they are from live, face-to-face interaction.¹

→ Young children learn about the world through direct experience with it, using all their senses. So it's not uncommon to see toddlers mimicking you swiping on our phones or holding a toy up to their ears, pretending to talk.

You can partner with parents to help determine what the children in your care need, and the best way for you to help. Sometimes that means leveraging technology, and sometimes it doesn't. The intentional use of technology can be a great tool to help them develop self-control, early literacy, and math skills, plus positive attachments with other people.

In this Phase . . . As a volunteer, your role is to **embrace their physical needs**. Leaders can leverage technology to ease transitions, create warm environments, and build trust. Young children think like artists, taking in the world using all their senses. In addition to hands-on experiences, technology can be used to safely tap into the natural wonder kids are born with.

Preschoolers are motivated by safety. As leaders, we can also use technology to help them know they are loved and seen. Certain types of technology can be used to help establish more trust, develop a young child's self-regulation, and build their confidence.

In Your Conversations . . .

BEFORE

Honor the parent. Survey the parents of your group to learn about their rules so that you can respect them and their screen time boundaries in your programming and conversations.

Evaluate. How are you currently using (or not using) technology in your group? Think about ways to leverage or adjust your technology use to make volunteering easier and keep preschoolers engaged.

Consult with your ministry leader. Learn any policies around technology use such as which apps are approved or rules around taking pictures.

DURING

Make it personal. How do you use your own technology while leading your group? When you choose to put down your phone and engage a preschooler, you show them you care and build trust.

Choose your words wisely. Pay attention to how you talk about technology because kids in your group may have varying levels of access. Speak in a way that includes everyone and doesn't assume anything.

Make it work for you, not against you.

Use technology to meet kids' needs, such as using music to get the wiggles out, dimming lights to help calm the room, or screens to help with transitions. Alternate between more active and more passive activities and louder and quieter activities so that preschoolers stay engaged but not overstimulated.

AFTER

Reflect. Ask yourself how technology can be improved or adjusted during group to engage kids and help them learn.

Follow up with your ministry leader. If there are technologies that would make volunteering easier and your group time more effective, let them know.

¹ Kwok, K., et al. "Children Can Learn New Facts Equally Well From Interactive Media Versus Face to Face Instruction." *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 07, Frontiers Media SA, Oct. 2016.