# A2 – Managing screen time

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Hi. My name’s Katherine Stannett, and I’m one of the authors of *New Close-up*. In today’s video, I’m going to be talking about what you’re looking at right now – your screen.

Here’s a pie chart that shows the results of a survey carried out in 2019. As you can see, there’s a tiny percentage – just four percent of students – who spent no time at all in front of a screen. Fifteen per cent spent two hours or less.

Just slightly more students – eighteen per cent – spent between two and four hours in front of a screen.

Now, look at the size of the yellow piece of pie in the pie chart. That represents 29% of students and they spent between four and eight hours every day looking at a screen.

And the biggest percentage – 34%, or just over one third of all students – spent more than eight hours in front of a screen.

And here’s the most amazing thing about those figures. They don’t include using screens for school or homework.

But is it always bad to look at a screen? Here are some advantages of using devices with screens: you can find out information quickly; you can experience the world even when you can’t leave home; you can stay in touch with your friends, talk to them and see them, even if you can’t be together; you can watch great films, listen to beautiful music and look at some amazing photographs; and of course, you can practise your English!

So, looking at screens isn’t always bad. Let’s look at some ways you can use your screens that are productive but also fun.

There’s so much information available on the internet. You can find out all sorts of interesting things about the way that people work, live, eat and play all around the world. The National Geographic website is often a great place to look, no matter what you’re interested in.

Don’t forget that if you’re finding it difficult to understand videos in English, you can switch on the subtitles. It’s a great way of improving your pronunciation and listening skills. Look out for this icon: ‘CC’, which stands for ‘closed captions’, or this icon.

And, of course, there are lots of good games and apps for practising English online. You can use apps like Quizlet and Kahoot! to make up your own quizzes and then play them with friends.

I mentioned before that we can use our screens to communicate with other people. That’s another great way to practise your English. Have you ever thought about finding a pen pal? When I was a teenager, I used to write letters to a pen pal in France to practise my French.

This was way before the internet existed, so I would post my letter in a post box and it would take about two weeks for it to get to my pen pal, and then another two or three weeks before I would get a reply. It’s much quicker today – you can get instant responses!

Of course, it’s important to be really careful when you make contact with other people online, so why don’t you ask your teacher to recommend a safe pen pal website?

So, these are just some ways that you can use your screen time to practise English and to have fun. But of course, it’s really important to step away from the screen sometimes. Don’t forget to talk to the real people around you who make you feel good – your friends and your family.

Try to spend some time every day outside. Looking at a photograph of a beautiful beach or a blue sky is wonderful, but it’s also important to breathe the air outside, to feel the sun on your skin and to smell the flowers. And you can’t do any of that online!

Do you have any rules in your family about when you can look at screens? My family certainly does! In fact, my children sometimes tell me off for looking at my phone when I should be listening to them! At home, we say no screens at mealtimes, and no screens last thing at night.

If you think that maybe you’re spending too long looking at a screen, here are some things that you can do. Set a timer on your computer or your phone. When the time is up, get up and stretch your legs. Then choose at least one of these activities: drink some water, open a window, talk to someone else in your house, help out with a chore, play some music with your eyes closed and dance around your room, go for a walk or a run, or do some muscle stretches or some yoga.

So, now here’s my challenge to you: Today, I want you to think of three ways you’re going to use a screen to practise English, and think of three things you’re going to do that don’t use screens.

Good luck, and thanks for watching!