

TOP 10 TIPS

How to get the most out of video chats with your children

Young children pick up communication cues from sight, sound, smell and touch. As video chat only involves sight and sound, help your child concentrate on those senses. Point out things your child can see and identify.



Keep very young children engaged by playing an age appropriate game-like 'peek-a-boo'. Turn the camera away from you, then back to your face and then sometimes when the camera comes back.



Choose a good time of day. Don't pick a time when they are hungry and restless.



Have materials ready. Storybooks, musical instruments, your child's latest drawing or whatever you plan to show them so they don't lose interest early in the chat.



Practice looking at the camera. It is tempting to keep your eyes on your own picture or the image on the screen, but you make engaging eye contact when you look at the camera and this is better for interactive communication.



Use the same greeting and tone of voice each time you start the chat. Infants and toddlers need this familiar visual and sound cue as there is no smell or touch which is what they would normally depend on.



Use a lot of gestures. Be close to the camera but not so close that your video partner can't see your hands. Don't be afraid to move. Don't be a talking head.



If possible try using a tablet or laptop so you can both move around to show different views and do different activities.



Plan in advance and pretend to share snacks. A good way to engage a child's interest is for the people on both sides of the screen to have the same snack and the adults pretend to hand it over.



Play music and sing. People on both sides of the camera can hear songs and sing or dance together and join in with instruments (even if it's just banging the table!)



There are a number of options for video chatting.

Skype can be downloaded for free on any phone, computer or tablet device. Similar results can be achieved with WhatsApp, FaceTime or Google Hangout.