

Our Top 10 Tips for Parents with Children Between  
3 and 6 Years of Age

“Mum,  
can I go on your phone?”



Image: Khanh Dang/Unsplash



**“Dad didn’t see me score  
the goal because he’s  
always on his phone.”**

# #1

# Enjoy the Time Spent Together

Put your phone away when playing with your child and **let them enjoy having your full attention**. You'll never get these times back and you'll soon miss them when they're gone.

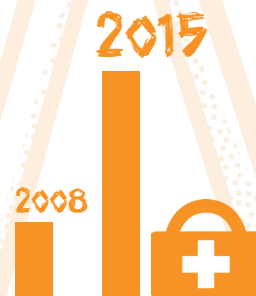
**"I often find it really hard to put my phone down when I'm at home. Since I'm self employed, I don't actually have set working hours. But when my 3-year-old suddenly started not wanting to play with me anymore because I'm mentally at work, I realised that I was going to have to do something about it. Now, most of the time, I leave my phone in another room!"**

Anna, director of a language school and mother.

## TOP TIPS

- Set clear boundaries around **screen time** for your work and leisure activities on your phone or other devices.
- Take some conscious time away from your phone and switch it off. For example, make the most of sitting down to dinner together and let your children tell you about their day.
- It often helps to let your family, friends and colleagues know in advance that **today**: "I'm only free after 8:00 pm!"

According to the Road Safety Board\*, the **number of children under the age of 5 having serious falls in play parks** has tripled in the last few years. One possible reason for this is that the parents are completely distracted by their phones.



\*Source: [www.kfv.at/zahl-der-kinderunfaelle-auf-spielplaetzen-gestiegen](http://www.kfv.at/zahl-der-kinderunfaelle-auf-spielplaetzen-gestiegen)



**“My parents always watch TV shows when they’re bored. And that’s when I ask to have a go on the phone.”**



# #2

## Set a Good Example

You child learns from you and wants to copy what you're doing. Show your child right from the start how to deal with boredom even without a phone or device.

"I just need some time to chill amidst all the chaos! I like to scroll through my Instagram or just watch silly videos. I used to just let my daughter watch Peppa Pig – but then there was always a fight when it was time to move on to something else.

Now, to take some time out, we read a book or a magazine together. And it's actually been relaxing for me too!"

Anouk, mum to a 3-year-old and passionate smartphone user.

**Note:** Even if your screen time seems necessary and justified to you, your children make little distinction between work and free time.

### MUM, I'M BORED!

#### Ideas for eating out

- Cut some **interesting shapes** out of a napkin
- **Build a house** using beer coasters
- **Try doing some origami using napkins**
- Make a **picture**
- Make a cool pattern using a **napkin**
- Bring a **picture book/magazine** to read together

### TOP TIPS

- Being bored is **important for a child's development** and allows them to build the skills of imagination and creativity. Try to encourage rather than hamper them in this and don't provide something for them to do right away.
- If the boredom really becomes unbearable, it's better if you give them some **specific ideas!**



**“I can’t do everything,  
but I can look  
at photos.”**



# #3

## Make your Devices Childproof

Suggest a few good ideas for your child to choose from. **Block in-app purchases and content services** so as to prevent costly surprises.

“I didn’t really notice the adverts to be honest. Until one day an advert for a horror game suddenly popped up on my phone. My 5-year-old was horrified. And so was I. Now I’ve got a better handle on it: My child is only allowed to play games that work offline and don’t have adverts. It was annoying at first, but now we’re used to it.”

Chris, dad to a 5-year-old, loves Netflix shows and horror films.

### TOP TIPS

Do you allow your child to use your device now and then? If so, make sure you remember the following:

- **Adverts** that are displayed in the apps on your phone are **customised to you** but not to your child. This means that they could sometimes be inappropriate for children.
- Children could click on your **private messages**, work emails etc. and send something they shouldn’t, albeit accidentally. Make sure these are password protected.

### READING TIP!

The ISPA Saferinternet.at brochure tells you how to make your devices childproof for free at: [www.ispa.at/technischerschutz](http://www.ispa.at/technischerschutz)



**“Sitting down to look at something is boring. I’d rather be doing something or playing.”**





# #4

## Choose Only a Few Apps, But Make Sure They're Good Ones

Apps should **support, stimulate and secure** your child's development. With this in mind, apps that you have to pay for are often better for your child than free versions, since data abuse and advertising are less likely.

"At first I thought that good apps should cost nothing. But now I've paid for a lot of apps. They don't cost much and it means you don't have to put up with the annoying adverts.

Leila, mum to a 4-year-old who likes to play educational games.

### SCREEN TIME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 0-3 YEAR-OLDS

- Avoid screen time as much as possible until **18 months**
- **Max. 10-15 min** at once
- **Don't leave you children alone** (screens are **not a babysitter!**)
- Simple, child-friendly content

### SCREEN TIME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 4-6 YEAR-OLDS

- Agree on rules
- **Max. 20 min** at once, no more than **1 h/day**
- **No screen time before bedtime**
- Educational and play programmes
- **Short, slow-paced videos**

### GOOD APPS\* ARE:

- **Empowering:** Promote development
- **Engaging**
- **Stimulating**
- **Safe:** Have age-appropriate content, no unexpected costs, time-limited

\*Source: Betterinternetforkids.eu (Positive content)

### TIP

**Educational games** can be especially useful for **3-6 year-olds**: This is how they can make the most of the **digital world to improve their learning** and for pastimes such as painting or playing with traditional toys.

**“What is that?!  
It’s scaring me!”**



**18+**



# Pay Attention to the Age Limits

Age ratings on games and films can **provide you with an essential guide** and **protect your child** from inappropriate content.

**“It’s hard! My little girl just wants to copy what her older brother is doing. We have now agreed that he will only play those kinds of games when she’s not at home.”**

Mehmet, dad to an 11-year-old and a 5-year-old.

The **European initiative PEGI\*** has an age rating system for the content in computer games.



The content of the game is suitable for everyone aged 3 years and above.



The game contains frightening content

\* Find out more at: [pegi.info/de](http://pegi.info/de)

Furthermore, computer games are also labelled with a **USK label\*\*** in Germany.



Released without age restriction with regard to content.

\*\* Find out more at: [www.usk.de](http://www.usk.de)

## TOP TIPS

- The age limits for computer games are set based on their content: However, they don't tell you anything about the playability of a game. For this you should take a look at the recommendations of the BuPP at [www.bupp.at](http://www.bupp.at).
- Make arrangements with your older children to protect their younger siblings from inappropriate content.

Films in Germany are labelled with what's known as the **FSK label\*\*\***.



Released without age restriction with regard to content.

\*\*\* Find out more at: [www.spio-fsk.de](http://www.spio-fsk.de)

**Be aware! App providers also have their own labels, which may differ from the age recommendations listed here.**

**“Suddenly this creepy clown popped up, even though I was looking at something that was not at all relevant!”**



# #6

## Don't Use YouTube as a Babysitter

Never leave your child unattended, even when they're watching TV. Unfortunately, all too often even harmless children's programmes are "enriched" with disturbing content.

"It's difficult when I'm on my own, I can't look after my child all the time. It's very tempting to stick on YouTube and press autoplay. But there's been a few times when my child has come across content that I find questionable.

That's why we've switched to audio books now and my son can play along."

Alan, dad to a 5-year-old.

### VIDEO TIP!

Video parenting guide  
"Frag Barbara!" YouTube  
- Niemals ohne Eltern



[www.fragbarbara.at](http://www.fragbarbara.at)

### MUM, I'M BORED!

#### Ideas for independent play

- Make a tower from **toilet rolls**
- Paint a **portrait**
- **Dress up** (e.g. imitate your favourite game character)
- Listen to an **audio book**
- Rehearse a **dance**
- Have a "**tea party**" with their favourite soft toys

### TOP TIPS

- There's nothing wrong with turning on YouTube now and then – **but make sure to deactivate the autoplay function** and keep an eye on what kind of videos your child is watching.
- Try to find alternative solutions that you can use more often, e.g. **audio books**. These stimulate the imagination and leave room to play.



**“And now, 10 years later,  
everyone makes fun  
of me.”**



# Don't Post Photos of Your Children Online

Think carefully before putting up photos of your child on WhatsApp, Instagram, and other forms of media.

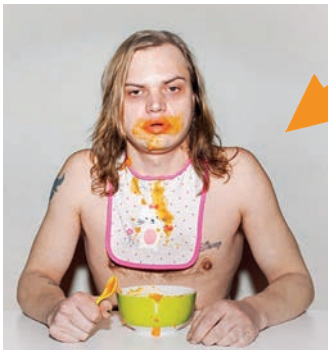
**Accept it when your child says “No”** to being photographed and **ask if it’s OK** before taking a photo of them, sharing on WhatsApp or other on-line media.

“When we take family photos sometimes I ignore it when my child says “no” – because I know that he’ll change his mind the next day and will be disappointed if he’s not in the photo with everyone else. But otherwise I always ask. I think my son’s opinion is important.”

Lisa, mum to a 6-year-old.

## TOP TIPS

- Most parents don’t have any photos of themselves posted online from when they were a child. Before sharing, always ask yourself: **Would I have wanted that as a child?**
- Think about it: **Would you have liked it if pictures from your childhood were shared around your friendship groups when you were a tween and teenager?**
- **Embarrassing photos** or photos where your child is **(half)naked** do not belong on the Internet – **you never know whose hands they might fall into!**



[deinkindauchnicht.org](http://deinkindauchnicht.org)

## LINK TIP!

The initiative **#DeinKindAuchNicht** by Toyah Diebel uses exaggerated photos to draw attention to the fact that children also have a **right to privacy**. “Funny” pictures of your child could lead to them being **bullied** later in life.

**“When I really like  
a game, I don't even  
want to go to the toilet!”**





# #8

## Watch Out for the Signs

At what point does playing/watching videos become too much for your child? If you notice that your **child is becoming restless or is overloaded from consuming too much media**, then it's time to take action. Support your child by **offering them specific alternatives**.

### TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME, WHAT NOW?

#### Alternatives

- **Bounce on the sofa**
- **Drink a cup of water**
- Make two animals **have a conversation**: For example, what would a duck say to a bear?
- **Do some crafts**
- **Dress up as or imitate** your favourite game character
- **Play hide-and-seek**
- **Play outdoors**: Go to the park, play a ball game
- Play Uno or another **card or board game**

**“At first I thought the behaviour was just normal for when you start playing a new game. But my child got really worked up and irritable. I had to do something to put an end to that. Now she only gets screen time once a week – and it’s worked out great for us! Although, of course, she was reluctant at first...”**

Paula, mum to a 5-year-old.

### TOP TIPS

- The good apps and games are the ones that are engaging. Which means it is normal if your child wants to spend some time on them. **Not everything becomes an addiction!**
- Make sure that your child is getting **sufficient exercise** and is able to **get a good night’s sleep**.
- Offer your child **specific alternatives**.



**“That’s not fair!  
Why am I not  
allowed?!”**

# #9

## Remain Calm During Conflict

Children need to learn the right way to argue and learn that disagreement doesn't have to turn into a drama. **Explain to your child what your concerns are** – it's important that your child understands why they aren't allowed to do certain things.

**"I'm just worn out from all these arguments! Every time they play with the phone, there's a fight. With me and between the children as well. Now I'm going to try to impose a phone or TV ban for two days every time there's an argument over a device."**

Milan, dad of three, works from home.

### Run out of ideas about what to do?

Call 147 for the **Rat auf Draht** helpline (area code not necessary) or visit the website at [www.rataufdraht.at](http://www.rataufdraht.at). They'll be able to give you plenty of support for how best to deal with your children.



[www.fragbarbara.at](http://www.fragbarbara.at)

## TOP TIPS

- And it's not just arguments with parents; children also have to **learn how to settle disputes** between each other too. Don't get involved in every single fight.
- Support your children by giving them ideas about how to solve the conflict, but allow them to learn for themselves how conflicts can be resolved.
- Don't forget: **Children need boundaries!** Sometimes you just have to stand your ground.

## VIDEO TIP!

Video parenting guide **Frag Barbara!** demonstrates how you can set **family rules together** in the video clips, amongst other things.

**“We had a great laugh  
playing computer games  
together!”**

Image: Kevin Jarrett/Unsplash



# #10 Have Fun Together

Don't forget that using media should be one thing above all else: Fun! **Explore what's on offer together with your child.** Right away, this gives you a better picture of what your child is doing in the online world.

## SCREEN TIME TOGETHER

### Top tips for activities to do together

- **Play dress up online** using filters, emojis or stickers
- Have a go at an **educational game** (e.g. on [www.kikaninchen.de](http://www.kikaninchen.de))
- Make a **video together**
- **Draw on your tablet** using your finger
- **Compose a ringtone**
- **Take photos of** each other
- **Integrate useful tools** such as the stopwatch or maps **into your everyday life**

**“For me, having a phone is about much more than just making calls. I like to take photos and look up inspiration for my DIY projects. My little one has already ventured into the digital world. But we're making sure that it doesn't become too much.”**

Elisa, mum to a 5-year-old.

## TOP TIPS

- **Get involved in your child's world** and see for yourself what your child experiences online. Allow yourself to enjoy a little bit of magic, **spending quality time together with your child.**
- **The sooner you start spending some quality time together, the easier** it is to make it a habit – including enjoying offline activities such as reading or doing crafts together.

# Imprint

**“Mum, can I go on your phone?”**

**Our Top 10 Tips for Parents with Children Between 3 and 6 Years of Age**

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# Support and Advisory Services

## Family counselling centres

We are available throughout Austria for all kinds of parenting-related questions.

[www.familienberatung.gv.at](http://www.familienberatung.gv.at)

## Parental education

Educational contributions on topics such as social media, mobile phones, sex education.

[www.eltern-bildung.at](http://www.eltern-bildung.at)

## Video parenting guide “Frag Barbara!”

The video parenting guide “Frag Barbara!” supports parents in questions relating to everyday Internet and phone usage.

[www.fragbarbara.at](http://www.fragbarbara.at)

## Saferinternet.at

Tips and information on safe and responsible use of the Internet and mobile phones with a dedicated area for parents:

[www.saferinternet.at](http://www.saferinternet.at)

## 147 Rat auf Draht

Free, anonymous 24-hour emergency hotline for children, young people and their guardians on 147 (area code not necessary).

[www.rataufdraht.at](http://www.rataufdraht.at)

## Digi4family

Interesting facts about digital media in everyday family life: From e-books to webinars.

[www.digi4family.at](http://www.digi4family.at)

## Stopline

Agency for the anonymous reporting of child pornography and National Socialist resurgence on the Internet.

[www.stopline.at](http://www.stopline.at)



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