ExploreK12™

Is this screen time worth it?

A quick framework for choosing high-impact digital learning

Not all digital tools deliver the same value. Whether you're choosing an activity for today's lesson or evaluating a tool for your school, these questions will help determine whether the screen time is worth it.

PURPOSEFUL

Does this technology have a clear instructional purpose?

- ☐ Does it support a specific learning objective or standard?
- ☐ Does the technology improve the learning experience rather than simply replace paper?
- ☐ Could I clearly explain why this screen time matters to students and families?

ACTIVE

Are students learning by doing?

- ☐ Are students solving, creating, discussing, or practicing — not simply watching?
- ☐ Does the activity require students to think critically and make decisions?
- ☐ Are students actively engaged throughout the experience?

PERSONALIZED

Does it meet students where they are?

- ☐ Does it provide meaningful feedback or adapt to student needs?
- ☐ Can students work at an appropriate level or pace?
- ☐ Does it help teachers differentiate instruction more effectively?

IMPACTFUL

Will this improve teaching and learning?

- ☐ Does it give educators useful insights into student learning?
- ☐ Does it make instructional time more effective or efficient?
- ☐ Does it offer learning experiences that would be difficult to replicate offline?

Is this digital activity worth including in your lesson?

10-12 checks

Yes. This digital learning experience is likely delivering meaningful instructional value.

7-9 checks

Maybe. Strengthen one or more areas to maximize student learning.

0-6 checks

Not yet. Consider another approach — or choose a digital learning experience designed for greater instructional impact.

Is this screen time worth it?

The best digital learning experiences don't just replace traditional instruction — they make learning more engaging, more personalized, and more effective.

Here's what high-impact screen time should look like in your classroom:

Subject	Active, intentional use	More passive or unfocused
Literacy	Students practice skill-building or read, annotate, record fluency, receive immediate feedback, and respond with evidence from the text.	Students complete digital worksheets with limited feedback.
Math	Students explore multiple strategies, use virtual manipulatives, receive personalized practice, and explain their thinking.	Students complete repetitive drills or passively watch worked examples without applying concepts.
Science	Students investigate phenomena through interactive simulations, test hypotheses, manipulate variables, and analyze results.	Students watch demonstration videos or click through static slides without investigation or experimentation.
Career Readiness	Students solve authentic problems, collaborate, create projects, and explore future career pathways.	Students passively consume information without applying skills or making decisions.

The question isn't whether students should use technology. It's whether every minute is helping them learn, grow, and succeed. High-impact digital learning should:

Help students ...

- ✓ Think critically
- ✓ Practice at the right level and pace
- ✓ Receive meaningful feedback
- ✓ Create, explore, and solve problems
- ✓ Build confidence and independence
- ✓ Connect learning to the real world

Helps educators ...

- ✓ Differentiate instruction
- ✓ Save valuable instructional time
- ✓ Monitor progress in real time
- ✓ Identify learning gaps earlier
- ✓ Make more informed instructional decisions

Ready to make every minute count?

Discover how ExploreK12 solutions are designed to create high-impact learning experiences across literacy, math, and science.

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