

The Importance of Play and Sleep in Child Development

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The Importance of Play

Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination.

It is *essential* to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children.



Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognised by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a **right of every child.**

Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, either with other children or adult caregivers. Play helps children develop new skills and abilities that lead to enhanced confidence.

Undirected play allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts. When play is ***child driven***, children practice decision-making skills and discover their own areas of interest.

"There's a lot happening during playtime. Little ones are lifting, dropping, looking, pouring, bouncing, hiding, building, knocking down, and more. They are learning key scientific concepts, such as what sinks and floats; mathematical concepts, including how to balance blocks to build a tower; and literacy skills, such as trying out new vocabulary or storytelling skills as children "act out" different roles. And when your children play with you, they are also learning - that they are loved and important and that they are fun to be around. These social-emotional skills give them the self-esteem and self-confidence they need to continue building loving and supportive relationships all their lives." Zero to Three Journal - zerotothree.org

Why is play so important?

1. Play lays the foundation for literacy. Through play children learn to make and practice new sounds. They try out new vocabulary, on their own or with friends, and exercise their imagination through storytelling.

2. Play is learning. Play nurtures development and fulfils a baby's inborn need to learn. Play takes many forms, from shaking a rattle to peek-a-boo to hide-and-seek. Play can be done by a child alone, with another child, in a group or with an adult.

3. Play encourages adults to communicate with the children in their lives. Adults support play by giving children the opportunity to engage in play, by knowing when not to intervene, and by knowing when to intervene.

4. Play gives children the chance to be spontaneous. You may think your child should be rolling the truck on the ground but that doesn't mean that truck is not equally useful as a stacking toy.

5. Play gives children choice. Having enough toys or activities to choose from will allow children to express themselves.

6. Play gives children space. To practice physical movement, balance and to test their own limits.

7. Play gives adults the chance to learn how to play again. One of the most challenging parts of play is incorporating yourself in it.

8. Play allows adults to learn their child's body language. Knowing when you should incorporate yourself in your child's play is key.

9. Play teaches adults patience and understanding. If you choose to join in your child's play make sure that you do not try to take it over. When play is controlled by adults, children lose some of the benefits play offers them, particularly in developing creativity, leadership, and group skills.

10. Play is fun. Learning to play well, both by themselves and with others, sets children up to be contented and sociable

11. Play has been shown to help children adjust to the school setting and even to enhance children's learning readiness, learning behaviours, and problem-solving skills.



Highly scheduled children



A young person may be “over-scheduled” by being taken to numerous activities.

Many parents feel as though they are trying to keep up with other parents and worry if they don't their children will fall behind, or that it means their not "good parents".

However, highly scheduled children have less time for free, child-driven, creative play, which helps protect them from pressure and stress.



Playing with your child

- Play offers parents a *wonderful opportunity to engage fully with their children*
- When parents observe their children in play or join with them in **child-driven** play, they are given a *unique opportunity to see the world from their child's view point*
- The interactions that occur through play tell children that parents are *fully paying attention to them and help to build lasting relationships.*
- Less verbal children or children who have difficulties with language may be able to express their views, experiences, and even frustrations through play, allowing their parents an *opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of their perspective.*



A decrease in free play may be explained by children being *passively entertained through television or computer/video games*.

In contrast to the health benefits of active, creative play and the known developmental benefits of play, there is ample evidence that this passive entertainment is not protective and, in fact, has some harmful effects.

Key points:

- There is no better way to promote success and happiness in children than the tried, trusted, and traditional methods of play and family togetherness.
- All children need ample, unscheduled, independent, non-screen time to be creative, to reflect, and to de-stress. Although parents can monitor play for safety, a large proportion of play should be ***child driven*** rather than adult directed.
- There are numerous developmental advantages of active play and children should not be over exposed to passive entertainment (eg, television and computer games).

- “True toys” such as blocks and dolls, with which children use their imagination fully, are better than passive toys that require limited imagination.



- The most valuable and useful character traits that will prepare children for success come from a firm grounding in parental love, role modeling, and guidance. Love and attention is best shown when parents serve as role models and family members make time to be together, to listen, and to talk, nothing more and nothing less.
- The cornerstones of parenting - listening, caring, guiding and sharing pleasurable time with your child, will act as the best springboard towards a ***happy, successful adulthood for your child.***



The Importance of Sleep

Across the world, bedtimes are getting later and average sleep duration is falling. The NHS is seeing more serious problems than ever: hospital attendances for children under 14 with sleep disorders have tripled over the past 10 years. A 2011 study based on schoolteachers' observations found that English students are the most sleep-deprived in Europe.

NHS guidance states that: Evidence shows that night time sleep is *just as important as healthy eating and exercise for children to develop...* The key to how much is enough sleep is whether a child gets up fairly easily in the morning, is alert and happy for most of the day, and is not grumpy.

Scientific evidence shows that the right amount of night-time sleep is ***just as important for children's development as healthy eating and regular exercise.***

Those who don't get enough sleep are more likely to be overweight or obese. This is because they tend to crave and eat sugary or starchy food during the day to give them energy to stay awake.

Younger children who are persistently sleep-deprived can be:

- irritable and overactive
- seek constant stimulation
- struggle to concentrate well. Such symptoms can be mistaken for mild ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)."

(<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrenssleep/Pages/howmuchsleep.aspx>)

Experts acknowledge that sleep plays a significant role in brain development and it is therefore important for children to get enough sleep as their bodies grow and mature.

Sleep is also crucial for teenagers - it is while they are sleeping at night that they release a hormone that is essential for the growth spurt during puberty.

Sleep physiologist Dr Guy Meadows: *“Some research showed that if children are sleep-deprived by just an hour a night, it could reduce their cognitive academic performance by up to two whole years,”* he says. *“We need to recognise that sleep is one of the most powerful performance-enhancers known to humankind. If you are serious about your child’s academic performance, then schools and parents should be really helping them get good quality sleep on a regular basis.”*

A child has to be awake enough to be focused and attentive in the first place, Dr Meadows says, and then well-rested to recall those memories and use them to solve problems in future. Poor sleep can affect every stage of the learning process.

When we are sleeping, our brains are very active. While in deep sleep, all the information children have learned gets selected, consolidated and stored in the long-term memory, so it can be put to good use at a later date.

How much sleep do children need?

Average Sleep Needs by Age

Newborn - 2 months old	12 - 18 hrs
3 months - 1 year old	14 - 15 hrs
1 - 3 years old	12 - 14 hrs
3 - 5 years old	11 - 13 hrs
5 - 12 years old	10 - 11 hrs
12 - 18 years old	8.5 - 10 hrs
Adults	7.5 - 9 hrs



The Importance of a Bedtime Routine

A bedtime routine is the best way to ensure that your child gets enough sleep. Devise a routine that lasts 30-40 minutes, and includes a bath and the chance to read a story (or stories) together. There are proven benefits of reading to children, even at very early ages.

Try not to change the routine – don't change it at all during the week, and if you want your child to have a slightly later bedtime at the weekend, then only change it by maybe an hour.

Bedtime is a chance to spend some quality time together. If it's a time both you and your child enjoy, your child will settle down in bed and drop off to sleep more easily.

At stressful times, such as when your child starts in Reception, and at the start of each new school year, your child will probably get more tired than usual and will need more sleep.

Between the ages of 11 and 18, your child will need 8.5-10 hours of sleep a night. It can be difficult to encourage older children to keep to a regular bedtime, but it's important to try.

Experts have linked a lack of sleep to problems with behaviour, concentration and achievement at school. A lack of sleep can contribute to weight gain too, because it inhibits the production of appetite-controlling hormones.

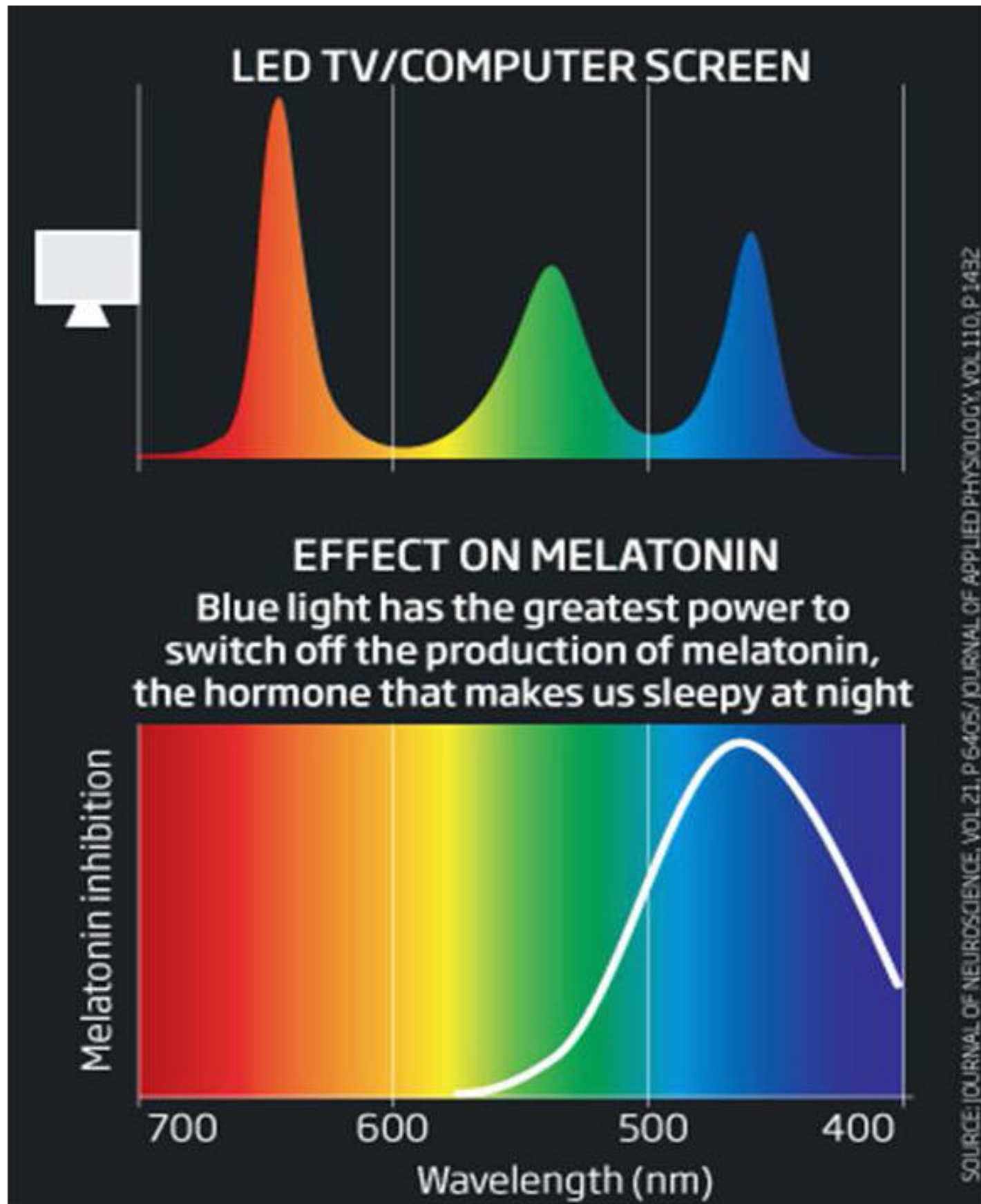


Limiting Screen Time

The National Sleep Foundation states that "school-aged children have become more interested in TV, computers, the media and Internet as well as caffeine products – all of which can lead to difficulty falling asleep, nightmares and disruptions to their sleep. In particular, watching TV close to bedtime has been associated with bedtime resistance, difficulty falling asleep, anxiety around sleep and sleeping fewer hours... Poor or inadequate sleep can lead to mood swings, behavioral problems such as ADHD and cognitive problems that impact on their ability to learn in school."

(<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/children-and-sleep>)

Recent research has shown that the **blue light** emitted from TV screens and other electronic devices suppresses *melatonin*, an important sleep hormone. Tablets, smart phones, and other electronic devices with self-luminous electronic displays have been shown to suppress melatonin at night; this can disrupt sleep, meaning your child has a lack of the sleep they need.



Suppression of melatonin and poor sleep has other serious health consequences such as an increased risk of cancer. It can also impair the immune system and may lead to other conditions such as type 2 diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

Professor Charles Czeisler, of the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard University said, ***"light affects our circadian rhythms more powerfully than any drug"***.

Renowned neuroscientist Professor Susan Greenfield has voiced concern that young people are spending an increasing amount of time in front of computer screens: ***"Time spent in front of a computer and less time spent in direct contact with other people will mean that children and young people's brains develop differently than our brains did."***



f.lux makes the colour of your computer's display adapt to the time of day, warm at night and like sunlight during the day. When the sun sets, it makes your computer look like your indoor lights. In the morning, it makes things look like sunlight again.

11 great tech gifts that you still have time to buy

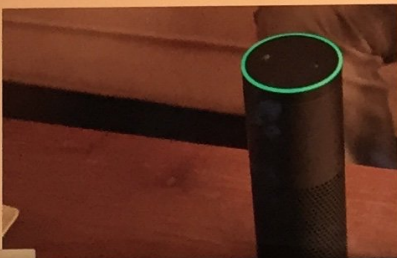
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FACEBOOK LINKEDIN TWITTER EMAIL PRINT

Time is running out for you to get holiday shopping done. Don't panic!

If you still haven't found a gift, we've got you covered with these last-minute gifts that are sure to delight even the most fussy of your relatives.

But seriously – don't wait much longer. You're cutting it awfully close, pal!



Braintree

ACCEPT PAYPAL, APPLE PAY, ANDROID PAY, BITCOIN, VENMO, CARDS AND MORE.

INTEGRATE NOW

MacBook Air

11 great tech gifts that you still have time to buy

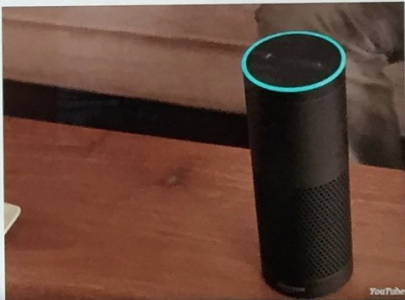
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Oriental Trading

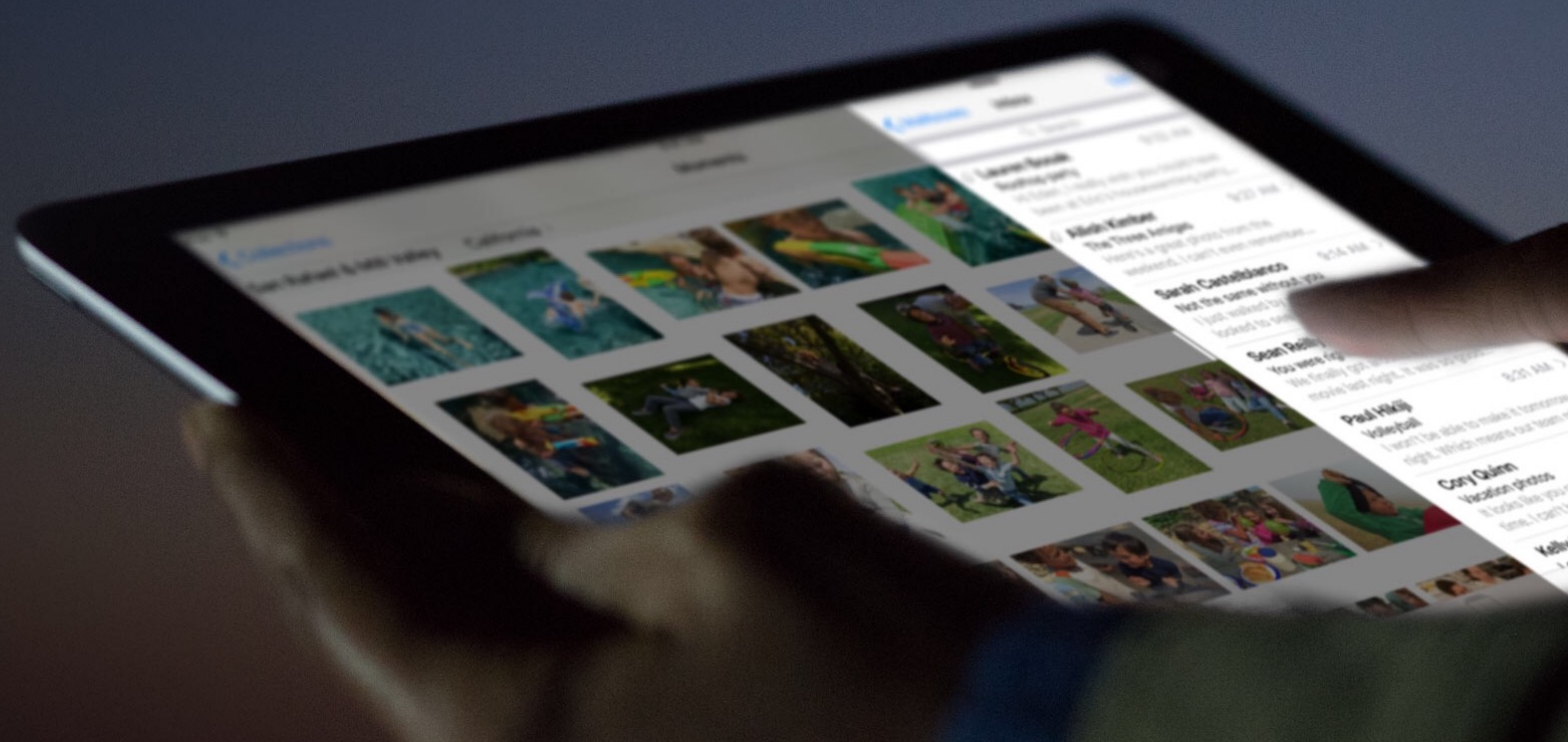
MacBook Air

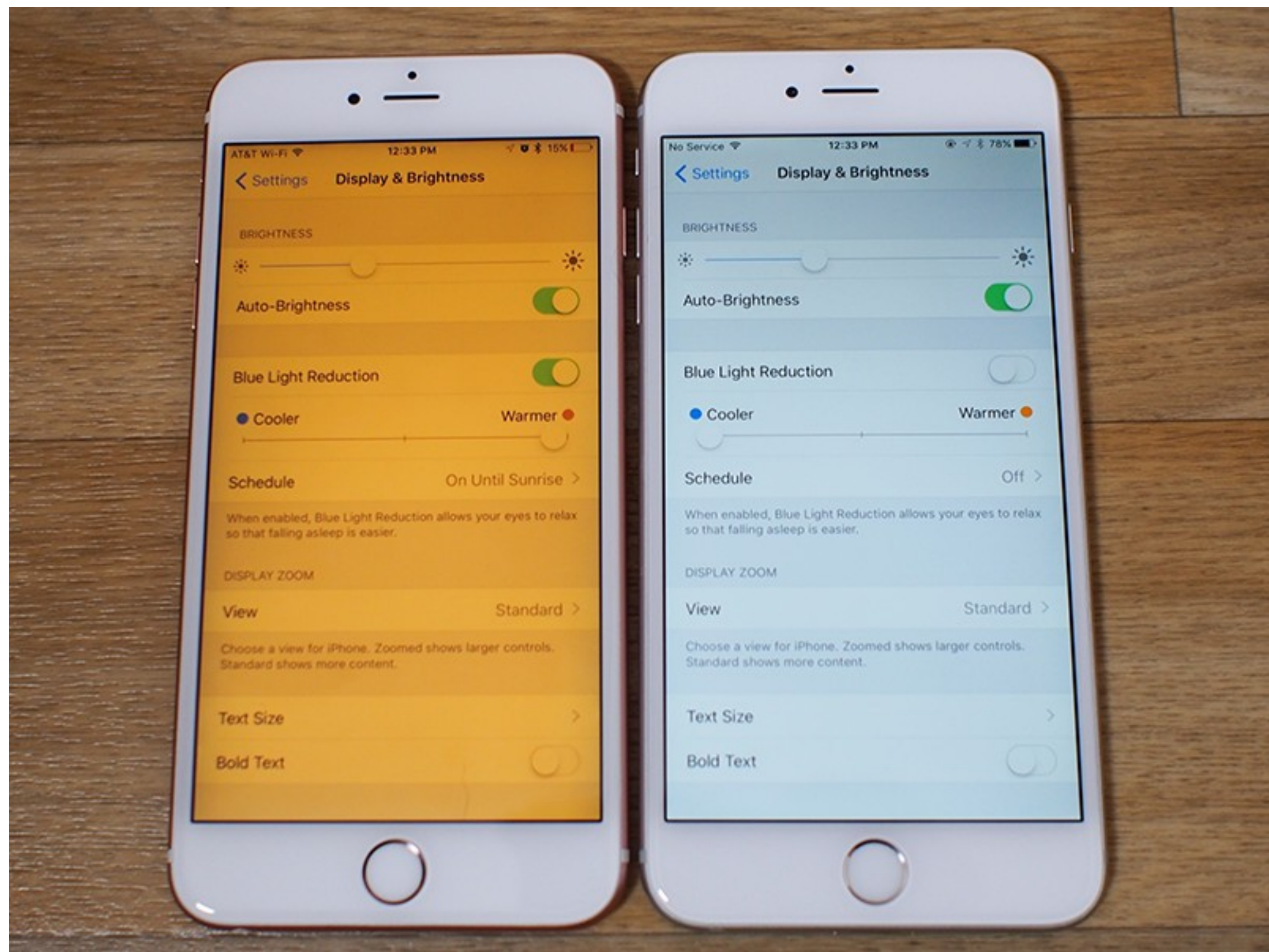


Night Shift

A lot of waking hours
went into thinking
about sleep.

Many studies have shown that exposure to bright blue light in the evening can affect your circadian rhythms and make it harder to fall asleep. Night Shift uses your iOS device's clock and geolocation to determine when it's sunset in your location. Then it automatically shifts the colors in your display to the warmer end of the spectrum, making it easier on your eyes. In the morning, it returns the display to its regular settings. Pleasant dreams.





Parents need to make their children aware of the importance of sleep, and perhaps become role models for their children, showing them, ‘I don’t stay up late, I have a regular bedtime, I don’t stay on my smartphone before bed.’”

Tips from the Children's Sleep Charity:

- 1: Avoid sugary snacks and caffeine, particularly at supper time. Opt for alternatives like banana, porridge or wholemeal bread.
- 2: Think about the bedroom environment: is it calm and conducive to sleep?
- 3: Have a consistent routine that you follow every evening in the hour before bedtime.
- 4: Consider whether bathtime is relaxing. If it isn't, separate it from the bedtime routine. If it is, have the bath 30 minutes before bedtime to allow the body temperature to rise and then drop again – this helps us feel sleepy.

5: No screen activity in the hour before bed; no TVs, computers, phones or tablets.

6: Activities involving hand-eye coordination help the brain wind down before bed, eg jigsaws or colouring in.

7: Have a set wake-up time, even at the weekend.

8: Provide your child with a visual cue so they know when it's time to get up, like a light on a timer. That way they know it's time to sleep when the light is off.

If your child struggles to sleep on their own or wants to come into your bed to sleep with you, it is important to understand that your child will need to learn to sleep independently, as this will promote independence in other areas of their life too.

Some children can find sleeping alone quite scary - if your child is struggling to sleep or wanting to sleep with you, try giving them a *special object* to keep by their bedside or in their bed with them, to remind them of you and reassure them they have not been forgotten.

The Gro-Clock can be used to train children to stay in bed until the time the parents wish.

It helps children who are too young to read an ordinary clock to understand when it's time to get up

The glowing screen shows images of stars and sun to communicate sleep and wake up time

The stars go out one by one during the night to show the passing of time

