

# The Bottomless Bowl

Those of us who are old enough can remember back to when screen technology existed in a balanced way alongside all other aspects of our lives. I remember having my favorite TV shows as a kid, and my husband remembers many happy hours playing video games at the arcade. Yet we didn't hassle our parents for another episode or more video game time. What was different back then? Until recently, screen technology had all kinds of natural limits. I'd get to watch one episode of my favorite show and then I had to wait an entire week for it to come on again. My husband could only play video games until he ran out of quarters. You had to physically go to the movie store to rent a movie, or later, wait for your Netflix DVD to arrive in the mail.

These were all built-in limits that allowed most families to easily enjoy screen time in a balanced way. All these natural limits are gone now. Tristan Harris (formerly of Google) coined the term Bottomless Bowl to describe this phenomenon. Imagine eating soup from a bowl that magically keeps refilling as you eat. It would be so much harder to gauge when to stop.



Take a moment to think back to your screen experiences as a kid. Then see if you can think of a few naturally limiting factors that ensured you had to part company with your screen and find something else to do. Write a few ideas below, and then turn to the next page for some more ideas.

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# NATURAL LIMITS

Here's a list of some natural limits for screen time that don't exist anymore. It took decades for them all to go away, so the younger you are, the fewer of these natural limits will have been part of your childhood. Many of you won't remember having to go to the movie theater to see a movie, but almost everyone will remember when leaving the house meant stepping away from your screen.

1. Leaving the house.
2. Going to school
3. Having to share one computer for the whole family
4. The show was over and there was nothing else on
5. Only one room with a TV and video game console
6. Very limited TV programming for kids
7. Having to go to the video store to rent a movie
8. Having to go to the movie theater to watch a movie
9. Having to go to the arcade to play video games
10. Sharing one family TV

The absence of these natural limits is one of the ways modern tech keeps us hooked. Think about how quickly Netflix cues up the next episode before you can even ask yourself "Do I want to watch another one?" Think about the endless scroll of social media feeds. These are just a few examples of how the tech companies have deliberately taken away stopping cues so you and your family stay glued to your screens longer.



Today's tech is pervasive, persuasive and it's never ending. Since the natural limits have been removed, parents are left with the job of setting all the limits themselves which is one of the reasons parenting tech today is so difficult. It's exhausting to be the bad cop all the time!

The tech itself is not the problem, it's the "persuasive design" and the "bottomless bowl" that cause the problems. In the last 20 years, it's like the gas pedal of technology has been super charged with persuasive design, and the brake pedal of the natural limits has been removed. No wonder we as parents can't keep up!

These two things, Persuasive Design and Bottomless Bowl, are what makes parenting technology so much different for you than it was for your parents. Once you understand the problem, it's so much easier to come up with solutions. I will show you ways you can take the persuasion out of the persuasive design, and add back natural limits (not parent limits) to make technology more manageable in your family. Once you learn how to Persuasive Design Proof your family, you can find the balance again.

