

These days, seems some kids are born with a smartphone in their hand

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A baby uses an iPad. Photo: Tia Henriksen / Flickr

Have you ever seen a 6-year-old use an iPhone? They're surprisingly good at it. A new study helps explain how this happens.

Most children have been using smartphones and digital tablets practically since birth, which means they build their skills from the earliest possible age.

Thirty-six percent of parents who answered a recent survey said their children had “touched or scrolled a screen” before they had celebrated their first birthday. An additional 33 percent of parents said their kids had done so when they were 1 year old.

Only 2 percent of the parents surveyed said they had waited until their children were 4 to introduce them to the wonders of the touch-screen.

Not Talking About Silicon Valley Babies

If you think these children were born in the heart of Silicon Valley, the area of California that's home to many of the world's high-tech corporations, think again.

The researchers conducted their survey of 370 families in a children's clinic that serves "an urban, low-income, minority" community in Philadelphia.

In fact, 13 percent of the parents who took the survey had not finished high school. Still, 77 percent of them said they had a smartphone, 83 percent had a tablet and 59 percent had Internet access.

Many of the infants and toddlers may have been poking randomly at their digital screens. Yet, according to their parents, at least some of them were doing something purposeful.

In Diapers, Using Apps

Fifteen percent of the children had used an app before they turned 1, and 24 percent had called someone, the researchers reported. The most common age to start using apps was 2, when 36 percent of the children tried them. Likewise, 36 percent of the kids started playing video games when they were 2.

If the children enjoyed playing with the digital devices, the parents seemed to benefit too. Nearly two-thirds of the parents said they handed over their gadgets to calm their children, and 29 percent said they used them to get their children to sleep.

The devices also served to entertain children while their parents did chores around the house or ran errands.

"From The Age Of 6 Months"

The American Academy of Pediatrics says that children should avoid screens until they turn 2.

"A child's brain develops rapidly during these first years, and young children learn best by interacting with people, not screens," the academy says.

However, only 30 percent of the parents surveyed said they had discussed screen time and other media use with their pediatricians.

The results of the survey appeared to surprise the researchers from Philadelphia's Einstein Medical Center who performed the study.

"We didn't expect (to see) children using the devices from the age of 6 months," said Dr. Hilda Kabali, a pediatrics resident who led the study. "Some of the children were using the screen for as long as 30 minutes."

Quiz

- 1 Select the paragraph from the section "Not Talking About Silicon Valley Babies" that is MOST relevant to include in the summary of the article.

- 2 What is the central idea of the section "From The Age Of 6 Months"?
 - (A) Digital devices do not help in the growth of a child.
 - (B) Children should interact with screens for better brain development.
 - (C) Pediatricians want children to avoid using smartphones until they are old enough.
 - (D) Pediatricians plan to further discuss screen time with parents of young children.

- 3 Which answer choice includes a pair of words with opposite meanings?
 - (A) The most common age to start using apps was 2, when 36 percent of the children tried them. Likewise, 36 percent of the kids started playing video games when they were 2.
 - (B) Only 2 percent of the parents surveyed said they had waited until their children were 4 to introduce them to the wonders of the touch-screen.
 - (C) Many of the infants and toddlers may have been poking randomly at their digital screens. Yet, according to their parents, at least some of them were doing something purposeful.
 - (D) However, only 30 percent of the parents surveyed said they had discussed screen time and other media use with their pediatricians.

- 4 Read the following sentence from paragraph 2 of the article.

Most children have been using smartphones and digital tablets practically since birth, which means they build their skills from the earliest possible age.

Select the answer option that BEST replaces the word "practically" WITHOUT changing the meaning of the sentence.

- (A) ideally
- (B) basically
- (C) regularly
- (D) negatively