



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades K to 3
About the Author:	This lesson was written for MediaSmarts by Ethan Anderson
Duration:	30-60 minutes

Finding Balance in Our Digital Lives



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

In this lesson, students look at the different ways in which we spend our free time and learn to find balance between active, learning and media activities. They begin by distinguishing between *Active*, *Learning* and *Screen* time, learn how activities can fall into more than one category; and reflect on their lives to see how well screen time is balanced by other types of activities. Finally, students consider how they might improve how their time is balanced.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- learn to participate in different types of activities each day
- learn to find balance in the types of activities they participate in
- consider the elements of screen and digital time that may lead to excessive use

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the handout *Balance Your Time*.

Procedure

Begin by asking students to think about all of the things that they do before and after school. This would include focused activities (piano lessons, hockey practice, homework) as well as more casual ones (watching TV, playing toys with friends, riding bikes around the neighbourhood). Co-create a list through discussion and then allow students to use this as a resource. The goal of this first section is that students will be able to create a list of activities that fill their waking hours.



Kinds of Time

Next, draw a large circle on the board and divide it into thirds. Tell students that each part of the circle stands for a different kind of activity: *Active Time*, which involves moving around and getting exercise; *Learning Time*, which is about learning or creating new things; and *Screen Time*, which is time spent watching screens (TV, movies, video games, computers, tablets, etc.). Ask students for **one** example of an activity to put in each part of the circle.

Now lead a discussion about the impact of different activities on a person's life. Make sure students consider the following questions:

- Why might we sometimes *not* feel like doing active or learning activities? (Too tired, bad weather, etc.)
- Are there things about media activities that might make us spend more time on them than other activities? (They can be “easier” because in many cases all we have to do is watch; they often have a story that we’re being told or that we’re part of; a lot of times the things we watch lead to other things to watch – TV shows are on one after the other, online videos link to similar videos.)
- Are any of these activities better than the others? (No – each one can give us different things: for example, playing basketball builds our strength and coordination, while playing an online game can build our reflexes or our thinking skills. However, it’s important that screen time be **balanced** by other activities.)

Divided Time

Distribute the handout *Balance Your Time* and have students write down or draw pictures representing their entire *Active*, *Learning* and *Screen* time activities for the last week. Circulate and prompt them with suggestions of things they might include in each category.

When students have completed the handout, give some examples of activities that might fit in more than one category, such as:

- going for a nature hike (Active/Learning)
- watching an educational TV show (Learning/Screen)
- dancing while watching a music video (Active/Screen)

Have students go back to the handout and see if any of the activities they wrote down can fit in more than one category.

Balancing Time

Ask students to look over the handout and see whether they have at least as many *Active* and *Learning* time activities as *Screen* time activities. Now have them write (using a different colour of pen or coloured pencil) or draw activities that they *could* do and would enjoy doing that would help to balance their lives.

Assessment/Evaluation

Have students describe, either by writing or drawing, a “well-balanced” day in which they did activities of all three types that they enjoyed.



Extension: Wacky Media Songs

You may consider supplementing this lesson with the TVOntario Original Series *Wacky Media Songs*. These short videos explore a variety of digital media literacy topics. Here are a few suggested videos and discussion topics:

[Think Twice With That Device](#). During her song, Ava keeps getting distracted by her phone. Before she knows it, her whole day is off track! It's important to be mindful about how we use media. Think twice before using a device!

Before the video, ask: Do you ever find yourself using a phone, the TV or something else like a video game console just because you don't have anything else to do?

After the video, ask: Think about your favourite website or app. What is it about the design that makes you come back to it?

What are some things you do with screen devices that you feel good about? What can we do to keep doing those but stop doing things that just distract us?

[Game On!](#) Want to play online games with friends? It can be super fun. Ava shares some tips on how to make sure we stay safe and don't fall into the trap of playing all day long!

Before the video, ask: When you're playing a video game online, do you ever have trouble stopping? What makes it hard to stop?

After the video, ask: What do you like about video games? How can we get the fun parts of games without spending too much time playing them? (Set a time limit before you start, and make sure to plan other things to do.)



Balance Your Time

