



CANADA'S CENTRE
FOR DIGITAL AND
MEDIA LITERACY

Is your screen use *creative*?

Not all screen time is created equal! It's important to reserve time for things like sleep, exercise, and spending time with friends and family, but the Canadian Pediatric Society also recommends that parents steer school-aged children towards screen activities that are *active*, *creative*, *educational* or genuinely *social*.

If you're wondering how to get started making media on your phone, tablet or computer, animation is a great place to start. You can start doing it as a family activity even when kids are very young and they'll soon be able to do almost everything themselves.

- ⇒ "We can do this as young as six or seven and it's really amazing how engaging this activity is and how committed they are. Even though it is such a labor-intensive process, they really do stay focused and fixated on the mission." *Jessie Curell*, Hands On Media Education

This is one of the best ways to get started making media. Install a stop-motion app on your smartphone or desktop and then tell your story one frame at a time. You can draw a flipbook (index cards are perfect for this), cut out images from old comics or magazines, or use toys, Lego or plasticine. You can even animate your friends and family in pixilation, or mix different kinds of animation together!

You can start just by playing around, but once you get serious you'll want to do some *pre-production* to plan out your story before you start. Pick some characters and make or draw a backdrop.

Next is *production*. Any kind of animation is all about *repetition*: take a picture of an image, make a small change, then take another picture.

- ⇒ In stop-motion, the rule is to move your character the length of an ant between every shot.

The key to animation that looks good is to keep your camera from moving. (Think of the animation as a play happening on a stage in front of the camera. Don't try moving-camera effects until you've had *lots* of practice!) You can buy a tripod if you want, but you can build one too: just stack Lego or other building blocks in two rows on a platform, just far enough apart to hold your phone or tablet upright.

If you've been using an app designed for stop-motion, it will have an editor built in. Pick a frame rate (eight to twelve frames per second will give you fairly smooth movement without needing too many shots) and play it back to see your animation.

- ⇒ "You're really creating magic." *Jessie Curell*

Most animation apps also let you delete mistakes and add titles and music. (This is the part that kids will probably need the most help with.) Some even let you do green-screen and other special effects.



- ⇒ Don't be afraid to start small. Pick any object you have around the house and film it moving across the table. Experiment with how you can make it look like it has a purpose and feelings, give it challenges to overcome and then watch it come to life!

Animation is also one of the best ways for your kids to share what they make online while still protecting their privacy. You can post their videos with your social media accounts and then share with friends and family.

Recommended resources:

Animation apps and programs:

- iPad: NFB StopMo Studio <https://www.nfb.ca/stopmo/>
- Android: Stop Motion Studio <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cateater.stopmotionstudio&hl=en>
- PC: MonkeyJam <http://monkeyjam.org/>
- Mac: IStopMotion <https://boinx.com/istopmotion/istopmotion-macos/>
- Chromebook: Clapmotion <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/clapmotion/kbjecgaklokmkijdkgeepcnjmcdoajao>

Learning and inspiration:

- Hands On Media Education <https://www.handsonmediaeducation.com/>
- National Film Board <https://www.nfb.ca/animation/>

