Tenacbook



A FREE GUIDE FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS · AGES 5–10

The Gentle *Off-Ramp*

How to end screen time at a natural stopping point, with fewer tears and less arguing, in four simple steps.

10-minute read

Includes a printable checklist

WELCOME

If screens ending is the hardest part of your day, you are not alone.

Maybe you know the moment well. You say "time to turn it off," and suddenly there are tears, bargaining, or a tablet held tightly to the chest. Five calm minutes turn into twenty tense ones, and everyone walks away a little worn out.

That moment is incredibly common in homes with children aged 5 to 10. It does not mean you have done something wrong, and it does not mean your child is "addicted" or difficult. It usually means the ending arrived in a way that felt sudden to them.

This short guide focuses on **one small thing: how screen time ends.** Not how many hours, not which apps, not what other families do. Just the last few minutes, and how to make them smoother.

What you will find inside

- Why endings feel so hard for children (and why it is not about you)
- The four-step Gentle Off-Ramp, with words you can use
- Three real-life examples, including the messy days
- What to do when it still goes wrong
- A printable checklist and 7-day tracker for your fridge

> **How to use this guide:** read it once, pick the step that feels easiest, and try it for a week. You do not need to do everything perfectly. Small, steady changes tend to matter more than big new rules.

UNDERSTANDING THE MOMENT

Why endings are so hard

When we understand what is happening for our child, it becomes easier to stay calm. Here are three reasons the end of screen time can feel so big.

1. Many screens are designed not to end

Autoplay counts down to the next episode. Games roll from one level straight into another. Videos suggest "just one more." Your child is not choosing a fight with you. They are being pulled forward by something built to keep going.

2. Switching gears is a skill still growing

Stopping something fun to start something less exciting takes real effort, even for adults (think of closing a good book at bedtime). Between 5 and 10, children are still building this skill, so it can take a little support from us.

3. "Stop now" often lands mid-story

Being cut off in the middle of a scene, a race, or a build feels unfair to a child, even when the time limit was agreed earlier. Much of the protest is about *where* it ended, not that it ended.

> **A gentle goal:** the aim is not zero protest. Some disappointment is normal and healthy. The aim is an ending that feels predictable to your child and a little calmer for you.

THE METHOD

The Gentle Off-Ramp in four steps

Think of it like a motorway exit. Nobody stops a car in the middle of the fast lane. You see the sign, slow down, and leave the road smoothly. These four steps do the same for screen time.

1. **Pick the stopping point first**
   Agree on an ending before the screen goes on, tied to the content itself.

2. **Give a landmark warning**
   Point to something they can see coming, not just a number of minutes.

3. **Join the last minute**
   Come close, show interest, and turn the ending into a handover.

4. **Let them press off, then name what is next**
   Offer a small choice and one simple next thing.

Each step takes less than a minute. You can start with just one and add the others when you are ready.

1 Pick the stopping point first

Before the screen comes on, agree on an ending that belongs to what they are watching or playing: two episodes, the end of this level, when the song finishes. Content-based endings feel fairer to children than a clock running out mid-scene.

TRY SAYING

"Before you start, how many episodes is it today? Two? Show me on your fingers."

"This game is a building one. Shall we stop when the timer rings and you have saved?"

Helpful extra: where you can, switch off autoplay in the app or device settings. It removes the countdown that pulls children into the next episode.

2 Give a landmark warning

"Five more minutes" can feel vague to a five-year-old. A landmark is easier: something they can see coming. Give one warning a little before the end, and a second just before. Asking them to repeat it back helps it stick.

TRY SAYING

"When this episode finishes, that is our stopping point. What happens when it finishes?"

"After this race, it is time to save and close."

3 Join the last minute

Instead of calling from the kitchen, come and sit beside them for the final minute. Look at the screen with genuine interest. It is easier for a child to leave something when someone is with them, and your presence turns the ending from an interruption into a handover.

TRY SAYING

"Ooh, who is that? What just happened?"

"Show me what you built before you save it."

4 Let them press off

Hand them the control. A small choice gives your child a sense of ownership over the ending, which often softens the protest. Then name **one** simple thing that comes next, so there is somewhere to land. Keep it short and specific.

TRY SAYING

"Do you want to press pause, or shall I?"

"Your snack is on the table. Want to race me there?"

> **Keep it light:** the next thing does not need to be exciting. A snack, a bath, shoes on, or helping you with something works fine. What matters is that the ending points somewhere.

REAL LIFE

Three families, three first weeks

Amara, 5

CARTOONS ON THE TV · AUTOPLAY

Before: the next episode would start on its own, and turning it off meant tears every evening.

What they tried: autoplay switched off, two episodes agreed at the start, and Mum sat with her for the end credits. Amara pressed the remote herself.

What happened: she still cried on day one. By day four the protest was much shorter, and one evening she announced, "That's two!" before Mum did.

Tobi, 9

BUILDING GAME · NO NATURAL ENDING

Before: "Just one more minute" turned into thirty, and stopping felt like losing his work.

What they tried: a visible timer, a warning to "finish what you are building," then saving. Dad asked for a quick tour of the build.

What happened: some days he still pushes back. But the arguing is quieter, and saving now feels like a normal last step.

Leo, 7 & Zara, 10

ONE SHARED TABLET · SIBLINGS

Before: whoever was told to stop first felt it was unfair.

What they tried: each child chose their own stopping point at the start, and Grandma gave both warnings to both of them together.

What happened: fewer "but it's not fair" moments. Not none, and that is okay.

THE MESSY DAYS

When it still goes wrong

Some days will be hard no matter what you do. Children get tired, hungry, or overwhelmed, and so do we. A tough evening does not mean the approach has failed. Here is what tends to help in the moment.

- **Stay close and calm.** Your steady presence matters more than finding perfect words.
- **Name the feeling.** "You really wanted to see what happens next. That is so frustrating."
- **Hold the ending kindly.** "It is hard to stop. The screen is finished for now."
- **Skip the debate.** Repeating the same short, warm sentence is often easier than explaining again.
- **Move together.** Gently walk with them toward the next thing you named.

> **If you gave in today, that is okay.** Every parent does sometimes. There is no need to make up for it with stricter rules tomorrow. Just pick up the steps again next time.

Every child is different, and this guide cannot promise a particular result. If screen time struggles feel very intense, or come with other worries about your child's mood, sleep, or behaviour, it is always reasonable to talk with your child's doctor or a family support professional.

PRINTABLE · STICK IT ON THE FRIDGE

My Gentle Off-Ramp Checklist

BEFORE THE SCREEN GOES ON

- [ ] We agreed on a stopping point (episodes, level, song or timer)
- [ ] Autoplay is off, if the app allows it
- [ ] I know the one thing that will come next

NEAR THE END

- [ ] First landmark warning given ("When this ends...")
- [ ] Second warning given, and my child repeated it back
- [ ] I came close and joined the last minute

THE ENDING

- [ ] I offered a choice: "You press it, or shall I?"
- [ ] I named the next thing and moved there with them
- [ ] If feelings came up, I named them and stayed calm

MY 7-DAY TRACKER

How it went	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Calm ending	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Some protest	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Big feelings	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Fill one circle a day. Look for a gentle trend over the week, not a perfect score.

Our family's stopping-point words:

A CLOSING NOTE

One small change, repeated kindly

The way screen time ends is only one moment in your day, but it is one that repeats. Making it a little gentler can take some pressure off the whole evening, for you and your child.

Try the Off-Ramp for a week. Notice what works in your home and keep that part. You know your child best.

OPTIONAL · IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE

The Screen-Time Peace Plan

What to Say, What to Do, and What to Play Next for Fewer Screen-Time Battles with Kids Ages 5–10

This free guide covers one moment: the ending. If you would like support with the wider picture, the Screen-Time Peace Plan is our full, paid guide. It goes beyond the Off-Ramp to help with:

- What to say in the trickiest screen-time moments
- What to do to build calmer daily routines around screens
- What to play next, so screen-free time has somewhere to go

Find it at **tenacbook.com**. There is no need to buy anything to use this guide; it is complete on its own.

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Wishing you calmer endings,
The TenacBook team

This guide offers general information for parents and caregivers and is not a substitute for professional advice. Every child is different, and results will vary. © 2026 TenacBook. You are welcome to print this guide for personal and household use.