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iPads could be good for **toddlers** because they are more like traditional play;   
The majority of two year olds who have access to iPads and smartphones can already swipe, unlock and actively search for apps and features.  
  
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Not all screen time is bad for **toddlers** as iPads and smartphones can help them learn in the same way as interactive play, scientists have found.

Last year the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) recommended that **children** should have TV-free days and limit screen time to a daily maximum of two hours.

Yet new research from the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at Cork University Hospital in Ireland suggests that **touch** **screen**technology has a different impact on the brains of **toddlers** to simply passively observing a programme.

"Interactive **touch-screen** applications offer a level of engagement not previously experienced with other forms of media and more akin to traditional play"Dr Deirdre Murray, Cork University Hospital

Researchers found that the majority of two year olds who have access to iPads and smartphones can already swipe, unlock and actively search for apps and features.

This level of interactivity is akin to play, say the experts.

"**Touch-screen** platforms, when used to their strengths, present many features which differentiate them from other forms of media and offer the potential for more positive effects, "said lead author Dr Deirdre Murray.

"Interactive **touch-screen** applications offer a level of engagement not previously experienced with other forms of media and more akin to traditional play.

"This opens up the potential application of these devices for both assessment of development and early intervention in high risk**children.**"

The researchers questions 82 parents with **children** between 12 months and three years.

They were asked how long their child used touchscreens each day, and whether they were able to unlock the screen, swipe through pages or images, and recognise and interact with specific features such as app icons for games.

Most parents owned a **touch** **screen** device and 87 per cent said their child was allowed to play with it for an average of 15 minutes a day. Nine out of 10 said their child could swipe, half said they could unlock the screen and nearly two thirds said their youngster could actively search for features.

The average age of the **toddlers** with the ability to perform these three skills was 24 months.

However, the experts caution: "Many applications designed for infants and **toddlers** already exist, but there is no regulation of their quality, educational value, or safety. Some of the issues that arise with passive watching of television still apply."

The researchers say recommendations should be updated to take into account the advert of **touch** **screen** media, which is likely to be beneficial for learning.

The research was published in the journal Archives of Disease in Childhood.