Building self-regulation with devices you already own

Most advice about children and screens is about minutes. A more useful question is what need the device is meeting right now.

For a lot of children the phone isn't only a distraction. It's a regulation tool – the thing that makes a loud room bearable, or a page of text possible. Every setting below was built for disabled people, and every one turns out to be useful for everybody. They are already on the device in your pocket, switched off.

LIGHT

Too much on the page

Colour Filters

Tints the whole screen. Ten seconds to try, and you switch it back if it doesn't help.

iPhone Accessibility › Display & Text Size › Colour Filters

Android Accessibility › Colour correction

Accessibility Reader

Strips a page down to the text alone. No ads, no images, no sidebar.

iPhone Accessibility › Read & Speak › Accessibility Reader

Android Install Reading Mode from the Play Store

SOUND

Too much noise, or not enough

Background Sounds

Rain, ocean or white noise playing continuously underneath everything else. Masks an unpredictable room with a predictable sound.

iPhone Accessibility › Audio & Visual › Background Sounds

Android No built-in equivalent – use a white noise app

Live Captions

Turns speech into text on screen. Built for deaf users. Now used by everyone on a loud BTS.

iPhone Accessibility › Live Captions

Android Accessibility › Captions › Live Caption

MOVEMENT

Can’t sit still long enough to do it

Speak Screen

Reads the page aloud, so your child can move around while they take it in. Reading and understanding are two different skills.

iPhone Accessibility › Read & Speak › Speak Screen, then swipe down with two fingers
Android Accessibility › Select to Speak

Dictation

Lets them talk instead of type. Spelling and having something to say are not the same thing.

iPhone Tap the microphone on the keyboard
Android Tap the microphone on the keyboard

FOCUS

Goes in for one thing, disappears for an hour

Guided Access

Locks the device into a single app until you unlock it. Homework stays homework.

iPhone Accessibility › Guided Access, then triple-click the side button
Android Settings › Security › App pinning

> Android menus differ between brands. If a name above isn’t where we say, type it into the search box at the top of Settings.

PRESSURE

Needs to push, carry or be squeezed

This is the one no setting covers. Children who seek deep pressure need weight or resistance against the body, and a screen cannot supply it.

What helps instead: carrying something heavy, pushing against a wall, a weighted lap cushion, a firm hug, something chewy.

If nothing on this page fits, this is often the need that was missed.

Try one thing this week

Pick the row that sounds most like your child. Change that one setting, leave the rest. These tools are a way in, not a replacement – where it matters, ask someone qualified.

boldadvisory.co/phone
More settings than fit on paper.