

# Let's Skype! Video Chat Use Among Infants and Toddlers

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Even though the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under two avoid all media exposure, there is evidence that many of these infants and toddlers are using electronic media regularly. Furthermore, while strong, nationally representative childhood media usage surveys exist (e.g., Common Sense Media's 2013 survey), they do not address the use of video chat in early childhood.

To remedy this lack of information, we conducted our own online survey, sent to 113 families with children between 6 and 24 months of age. We found that nearly 90% of these families use video chat with their infants, and 43% use it at least once a week. Video chat was the primary means of remote communication for infants and toddlers. Mothers were usually the ones physically present with the child during a video call, and most families used it most often to connect with the child's grandparents. Many parents spontaneously reported that they saw video chatting as an exception to their otherwise strict rules about media exposure.

Given how little is known about this phenomenon, we see some important future directions in this area:

- Including video chat questions in future nationally representative surveys of childhood media usage
- Conducting home observations of natural family video chat interactions
- Conducting controlled laboratory experiments testing infant engagement in video communication and the developmental effects of extended exposure to video communication
- Conducting surveys on parent attitudes toward video chat as an exception to child media use guidelines

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