



[Home](#) | [Parenting Corner](#) | [Health Topics](#) | [Bookstore & Publications](#) | [Professional Education & Resources](#) | [Advocacy](#) | [Member Center](#) | [About AAP](#)

[News Room](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Search: Powered by Google™



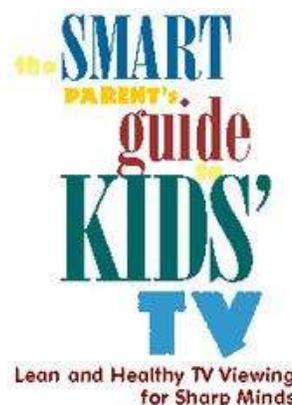
Smart Guide to Kid's TV

Turning Kids on to Smart TV

You watch what foods your kids eat, the toys they play with and how much sleep they get. But are you watching what they learn from TV? Like maintaining a balanced diet or regular bedtime, establishing healthy TV habits is one of the most important things you can do for your family.

With more and more TV options, selecting the right programs for kids can be a challenge.

This guide can help you choose good programs for your children. Along with reading, playing and time with you, the right mix of children's television can spur curiosity, discovery and lots of fun.



Hey, Mom and Dad! Do you know...?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- The average child watches 3 hours of TV a day -- 2 hours of quality programming is the maximum recommended by the Academy.
- Active play time is needed to develop mental, physical and social skills.
- Children who watch violence on TV are more likely to display aggressive behavior.
- Young children don't know the difference between programs and commercials.

The New Ratings System: More Content Information Still Needed

Children's television ratings can never replace good parental judgment. The new V-chip ratings system developed by the TV industry offers parents only general warnings about programs to avoid but does not signal programs that have real educational value. A program like "Kratz's Creatures" could receive the same rating as a violence-laden cartoon. Parents must look carefully for shows that both educate and entertain their children.

Top TV Tips: Building a Balanced TV Diet

You are your children's first and most influential teacher. The values and coping behaviors your children learn now will last a lifetime. Use TV to promote your children's health by building a balanced TV diet.

1 Watch What They Eat and Watch What They Watch

How much your kids eat has a big impact on their health; so does how much TV they watch.

THINGS TO DO

- Start by charting your family's current TV intake; list all TV shows watched in a week.
- Discuss how much time your family spends with TV, which programs are worthwhile and which can be dropped in favor of other activities.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

- Parents should limit their children's TV viewing to one to two hours of quality programming a day.
- Parents should take advantage of high-quality programs offered on videocassettes or from other sources.

2 Know What's Inside the Box

You carefully read the labels on the foods your children eat. Do the same with TV. Lots of sugary sweets are not good for kids. Neither are programs with violence, lewd language and sexual overtones.

WHAT TO DO?

- Read the TV listings and reviews.
- Preview programs before your kids see them. Talk to teachers and pediatricians to learn what they recommend.
- Select TV programs that build interest in other activities, such as reading, hobbies or the outdoors.

3 Add Plenty of Nutritious Content

Look for TV "main dishes" with educational content and positive characters and values.

RESEARCH SHOWS

- Both school readiness and verbal and math abilities were greater in children who watched "Sesame Street" and other educational programs.

University of Kansas, Center for Research on the Influence of Television on Children, May 1995.

4 Sit Down With a Good "TV Meal" - Don't Just Snack Away

Don't let your children just "watch TV." The next time your children ask, "Can I watch TV?" ask them what *specific program* they want to watch. Help your children get in the habit of watching one TV program, then turning the TV off and doing something else. Involve your children in setting TV rules.

SOME IDEAS

- Don't let your children watch TV until after their homework or chores are done.
- Make that extra effort to watch some shows together. By watching together, you're telling your children you care. "Co-viewing" can lead to lasting educational benefits.
- Tape quality shows and view them at a later time.

5 Put Down the Clicker and Get Some Family Exercise

TV should not replace active play. Your TV diet will be most successful when it includes lots of "family exercises,"

such as family discussions and activities.

TV programs should be springboards that spur curiosity, discussion and learning.

PARENT ACTION

- Talk with your children. Ask them, "What do you learn from that program?" or "Why do you like to watch that character?"
- When you see a portrayal that offends you, let your children know. Teach your children that programs that glorify violence or promiscuity and present gender, racial, cultural or other stereotypes are against your values.
- Weave "a web of learning" for your children. Good TV programs can spark interest in related books, conversations and activities.

Parent's Trust PBS

Parents (70%) believe that the best programming for children and young people can be found on PBS.*

Parents' top program picks for preschoolers*:

- "Sesame Street"
- "Barney & Friends"
- "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood"
- "Lamb Chop's Play-Along"
- "Reading Rainbow"

*National Survey, Children/Parents: Television in the Home, Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, June 1996

For older children, shows on PBS and other networks - such as "Bill Nye the Science Guy," "Beakman's World," "Wishbone" and "Kratts' Creatures" - educate even as they entertain.

This information was adapted from "The Smart Parent's Guide to Kids' TV" by Milton Chen, Ph.D., director of the Center for Education and Lifelong Learning at PBS member station KQED in San Francisco, CA. Published by KQED Books (1994), copies are available for \$8.95 by calling Public TV Books, (800) 358-3000.

For More Information on Children's Programming:

- Talk to your pediatrician if you have specific questions - or check brochure racks in his or her office for information about kids and TV.
- The Ready to Learn Service on PBS offers more than 40 hours a week of quality educational children's programming *without commercials*, plus resources for parents and other caregivers on how to use television as a learning tool. Contact your local PBS station for information about children's programming services or visit PBS ONLINE at <http://www.pbs.org/>.

TV TV TV television television

© COPYRIGHT AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Site Map | Contact Us | Privacy Statement | About Us | Home

American Academy of Pediatrics, 141 Northwest Point Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL, 60007, 847-434-4000