

# Tech Time! TV, Videos, and Young Children

*Watching TV and videos is part of daily life in many families—but the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says to be cautious. Too much screen time—time spent in front of TVs and other electronic devices—may cause problems for babies and young children. These problems include lack of exercise, obesity, eyestrain, and not enough active learning or play with others. Here are some ways to help your children learn good viewing habits.*

## Help your child choose what to watch.

- Keep in mind that the AAP recommends that parents discourage any screen time (including TV and videos) for babies and children under age 2. They also suggest no more than 1-2 hours of screen time per day for preschool-age children.
- Remember that most videos and shows (including the news) are meant for adults or older children, not babies or preschoolers. They may contain vulgar talk, rude behavior, sexual content, disturbing images, or violence. These things may lead to bad dreams, fears, and aggression or other behavior problems in young children.
- Preview programs and videos so you know what your child will be seeing. Allow mostly high-quality educational TV shows and videos. They can inform children and still be fun to watch.
- Pre-record shows so that you can skip commercials that promote unhealthy food choices and that place too much value on buying toys and other products.
- Watch with your child when possible. Ask questions and make comments that help build his media literacy. "What does that ad want us to buy?"

## Make a weekly viewing schedule.

- Be clear with your child about how much screen time you allow each day. Help her plan how to use her screen time (for viewing, for using the computer, or for electronic games). Take into account her screen time at child care or preschool.
- Let your child choose from a list of shows or videos that you know are suitable. For example, if you allow one hour of viewing time daily, he might plan to watch two half-hour videos on Monday and a one-hour program on Tuesday.
- Change the schedule together each week: "Last week you watched *Between the Lions*. Do you want to do that again this week?"
- If older family members want to watch shows that are not suitable for babies or preschoolers, ask them to record the programs to watch when the younger children are not around.

## Help your child think of more active ways to learn and have fun.

- Teach your child crafts, board games, and other activities to take the place of watching TV or videos.
- Avoid making TV a centerpiece of home life. Keep TVs out of children's bedrooms and playrooms. If you keep the TV turned off most of the time, especially during meals, children can learn to entertain themselves.

## For related Web resources, see "Tech Time! TV, Videos, and Young Children" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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