



Center for Early Education and Development

Questions About Kids

How Can I Guide My Child's TV Viewing?

Here are some ideas for parents to help guide their children's TV viewing:

- Be a good model yourself. Eliminate some TV watching by setting a few basic rules, such as no TV during meals or no TV before completing household tasks or homework. Designate certain weekdays as "No TV" days and plan other activities with the children for these times.
- Plan to view specific programs instead of whatever is on. Try to balance action, comedy, fine arts, sports, etc.
- Decide what is to be done between designated programs. With young children, be sure they have some physical activity.
- Use the newspaper or TV Guide to select programs that feature children in your child's own age range.
- Make sure TV does not substitute for other more appropriate activities.
- Balance reading and TV. Follow up interesting programs with library books.

Participate in your child's viewing by:

- Explaining situations that are confusing.
- Asking the child his or her feelings or responses to the program when it has ended.
- Helping the child analyze commercials (note the exaggerated claims and that makers of the product pay for advertising),

- Discussing the difference between fantasy and reality.

Television violence can be harmful to young children, according to a recent report from the National Institute of Mental Health. Children can become hard-hearted from watching violence on TV. They can also become frightened, worried, or suspicious. Researchers also found that children who watched many violent programs tended to be more aggressive on the playground and in the classroom.

Psychologist John Murray, Ph.D., lists the following actions you can take to help alleviate this potential problem:

- Watch at least one episode of each program your child watches so you know how violent it is.
- When you are viewing together, discuss the violence with your child. Talk about why the violence happened and how painful it was. Ask your child for ideas about how the conflict could have been resolved without violence.
- Explain to your child how violence on entertainment programs is "faked" and what might happen if other people casually tried these same stunts.
- Encourage your child to watch programs with characters who cooperate well and care for each other. Such programs have been shown to influence children in positive ways.



Questions About Kids is on the Web at:

<http://cehd.umn.edu/ceed>

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The "Question About Kids" series is published by the Center for Early Education and Development to provide state-of-the-art information about young children and families. They are reviewed by a panel of child development experts at the University of Minnesota. For further information, contact the Center at 612-625-3058.