

10 things parents can do

As a parent, there are many ways you can help your child develop positive viewing habits. The following tips may help:

1. Set limits

Limit your child's use of TV, movies, and video and computer games to no more than 1 or 2 hours per day. Do not let your child watch TV while doing homework.

2. Plan your child's viewing

Instead of flipping through channels, use a program guide and the TV ratings to help you and your child choose shows. Turn the TV on to watch the program you chose and turn it off when the program is over.

3. Watch TV with your child

Whenever possible, watch TV with your child and talk about what you see. If your child is very young, she may not be able to tell the difference between a show, a commercial, a cartoon, or real life. Explain that characters on TV are make-believe and not real. Young children may worry that what they see could happen to them or their family. News broadcasts also contain violent or inappropriate material. If your schedule prevents you from watching TV with your child, talk to her later about what she watched. Better yet, videotape the programs so that you can watch them with your child at a later time.

4. Find the right message

Discuss ways that people are different and ways that we are the same. Help your child learn tolerance for others. Remember, if you don't agree with certain subject matter, you can either turn off the TV or explain why you object.

5. Help your child resist commercials

Don't expect your child to be able to resist ads for toys, candy, snacks, cereal, drinks, or new TV programs without your help. When your child asks for products advertised on TV, explain that the purpose of commercials is to make people want things they may not need. You can also tape programs and leave out the commercials or buy or rent children's videos.

6. Look for quality children's videos

There are many quality videos available for children that you can buy or rent.

7. Give other options

Watching TV can become a habit for your child. Help your child find other things to do with his time, such as the following:

Playing

Reading

Activities with family, friends, or neighbors

Learning a hobby, sport, instrument, or an art

8. Set a good example

You are the most important role model in your child's life. Limiting your own TV viewing and choosing programs carefully will help your child do the same.

9. Express your views

When you like or don't like something you see on television, make yourself heard. Write to the TV station, network, or the program's sponsor.

10. Get more information

Available at: <http://www.aap.org/family/tv1.htm>