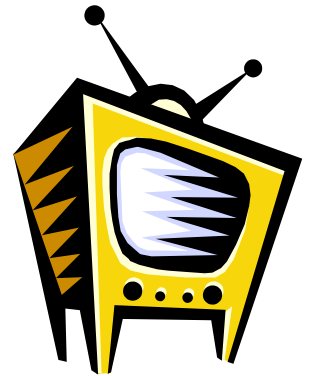


TV

Do you know how much TV your child is watching? Are you sometimes worried about the content of programmes they see?

It is normal to be worried about the effect of TV on your child **and** to enjoy the quiet time you get when the kids are engrossed in their favourite show.

TV can have a positive effect on your children if you manage what they see and how long they watch. There is no doubt that many programmes are educational, giving you and your child play ideas and even getting you singing along to the Tweenies or working out the clues with Blue.



But watching too much TV can have a harmful effect on your child. Research tells us if your child is watching 4 or more hours of TV each day they are more at risk of being obese, spend less time on homework and read less well. If your child watches TV in their bedroom they are also more likely to become obese and it'll be harder for you to keep an eye on what they watch.

You may be asking how you can help your child get the most out of TV without all these negative effects.

First of all keep their TV viewing to two hours per day, this includes video watching too. Secondly, make sure they are watching good quality educational TV, there are plenty of programmes packed with play ideas, rhymes and early learning information. If these programmes are not on at the time you want you could video tape them to play when it suits your family.

Keep a close eye on the content of shows, videos and computer games. When children see a lot of violence on TV, video's and through computer games they are more likely to be aggressive themselves. TV violence is also linked to children losing their sensitivity when others are hurt and being more fearful. It is important to keep children's exposure to TV violence as low as possible, so you could set some rules about what it is okay to watch and what is not okay in your house.

News programmes are often forgotten when it comes to limiting TV but they can display some very distressing scenes of natural disasters, wars and so on. If your child does see upsetting news coverage talk to them about it straight

away. Explain calmly that the images are not nearby and reassure your child of their safety.

Other ideas include sticking to the ratings on electronic games which tell you which age group they're for. Set up parental control systems on your home computers to make sure only appropriate sites can be used.

Last of all take the TV out of your child's bedroom. Having a TV in the bedroom has far more negative effects than positive for children. It can be isolating, unsuitable programmes may be viewed and having the TV on can interfere with the natural process of falling asleep. You'll be doing your child a favour if you keep the TV out of their bedroom.

Parents' tips:

Kerri, mother of Alivia, aged six, Elana, aged two and Lewis, aged one, from Tunstall, says: "We make sure the TV is turned off, not kept on in the background, when the kids are doing something else. TV can be very distracting. We restrict their TV to none before school or while they're eating, they watch children's programmes between 3.30 and 5 pm".

Margaret, mother of Ashley, aged four and Angela, aged three, from Newstead, says: "I try to monitor what they watch so they don't see too much violence. Even some children's cartoons can be violent. When it's educational TV can be good, we enjoy the Tweenies".



For more information on First Steps
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