



Tips to Get the Most From Your TV Viewing

TV is a tool—what children get from it depends on how well it's designed and how well children are guided to use it. PBS has taken care of the design. As your child's first teacher the guidance comes from you. Children learn by doing—by interacting with the people and objects around them. Hands-on experiences and repetition help them to digest and learn information. PBS can give you some great ideas for fun and interesting ways to do this.

Make your viewing choices from the TV listings, not the remote control. Instead of turning on the set just to fill time, or surfing channels until you find something you don't mind watching, use a TV guide or a newspaper. Highlight the programs you really want to watch and only turn on the set for those programs. It may not be a rule your children are happy about, but consider making the remote control a tool that only grown-ups and older children can use.



Balance Viewing Time

Sometimes kids who watch a lot of TV don't spend enough time doing the other things they need to grow up strong and healthy, like talking, reading, playing, and relating to others. Limit viewing time to 10-20 hours a week, and make sure kids have other fun activities to choose from. Keep handy a list of fun things your children like to do and when they ask to watch TV, suggest something from the list!



View Actively

It's fine to watch TV to relax, but remember that children learn TV viewing habits by watching adults. For example, if you tend to be quiet and still when you watch, so might your kids. And, when kids don't interact with the set, they don't learn how to view actively. So, at least sometimes, watch with your kids. Talk back to the set. Ask kids to predict what will happen next or to imagine a different ending. Encourage your children to sing and dance along with the program.



Make Connections

Talk about the connections between what you see on TV and your child's daily life. Be ready to talk, read or do activities that can build on or extend any topic you see on TV. If you and your children watch a show on penguins, do a web search together about penguins. If you watch a show where the kids are in a poetry contest—write your own poetry! Other handy activities that can reinforce any program or storybook include:

- ✓ Making a graph;
- ✓ Taking a vote;
- ✓ Writing your own story or sending a postcard;
- ✓ Painting a mural or chalking up the driveway;
- ✓ Interviewing one another or other people; or,
- ✓ Sharing a storybook!