



Guidelines for Rating Children's Television

Smart TV—TV that teaches—is often intended to be content based: it is about “what” children need to learn. For instance, some programs teach children specific skills or topics like the letters of the alphabet or weather. But smart TV can also be process based—and this reflects “how” children learn. And, of course, many of the shows on PBS are a mixture of both!

Every child is unique and develops at his/her own pace and learns in his/her own way. Spend time talking with your children about what they like to watch on TV and why. Watch TV together and choose shows that are a good match for what your child needs to learn and how they learn best!

Here are some guidelines to help you judge what kinds of programs will be beneficial for your children.



Television is a Good Thing When:

- It is developmentally appropriate—a good match between your children's growing needs and the subject matter of a show.
- It encourages creativity and critical thinking.
- It introduces your children to the skills and ideas they need to learn.
- It models ways to solve problems, to cooperate, and get along with others.
- It engages your children to sing along, dance along, ask questions and respond.
- It entertains and teaches, too.
- It reinforces the values that are important to you.
- It helps your children to appreciate other families, communities, and cultures.
- It inspires your children to want to learn more and read.



Television is a Problem When:

- It occupies too much of your children's time.
- It doesn't help you teach your children the values that are important to you.
- It teaches your children ideas, words, or behavior you feel you have to “unteach.”
- It is not created for an audience of children and it is too “adult.”
- It exposes children to violence as a means of problem solving.
- It models gender, racial or cultural stereotypes.
- It encourages children to think that they need to buy products.