



2 Steps to Smart TV

Parenting is hard enough. When your children watch television it shouldn't make your job harder!



1. Know What Your Kids are Watching

What are your children's two favorite shows? What do you think they can learn from those shows? Talk with them about the shows they watch. Remember that all TV teaches!

Not knowing what your kids watch is like inviting a stranger into your home—a stranger that may not have the same values as you. You can tell if a show is making your job easier or harder by picking a value you are trying to teach your child (e.g., finding a peaceful way to solve problems). Then watch a show with your child. Together, count how many times the show reinforces that value—tells your child this is okay—or contradicts that value—tells your child it is NOT okay. A TV program that frequently contradicts your values may keep kids entertained, but it will make your job harder as a parent.



2. Look to PBS

The shows on PBS are Smart TV—TV that teaches! They are different from shows on other channels in these important ways:

✓ **No commercials**

Commercials and advertisements can create a lot of tension by encouraging children to ask for things that you prefer they not have. Commercials can also make your children feel like they need to have the latest things in order to be cool. Talk with your children about the differences between needs and wants. Discuss the pressures they feel to wear and own "the right stuff." While PBS shows do have sponsors, these sponsors are restricted from using sales gimmicks and telephone numbers or creating a "call to action."

Instead of commercials, many PBS stations broadcast educational, non-commercial breaks between the daytime series. These breaks use the familiar format of a commercial to introduce young viewers to fun, informative, educational ideas and concepts.

✓ **Research**

PBS programs are designed to be educational as well as fun, and they are backed by research, so you can trust them to nourish, as well as entertain. The producers, the stars, and the writers work with educational consultants. Together they create programs, characters, and puppets to create healthy role models for children.

✓ **Age Appropriate**

A 12-year-old is capable of different skills than a 3-year-old. The same is true for what children learn and want from TV. What's okay for older children to watch may not be appropriate for toddlers. Smart TV—TV that teaches—does so because it reflects the skills, interests and capabilities of a specific age group. On PBS you won't see listings for children "ages 2-10." Instead, programs are designed especially for a particular age group such as toddlers, preschool or elementary.