

Tips for Parents

We at the Parents Television Council believe parents are the final arbiters of what is and is not appropriate for their child to watch. That is why we strive to provide comprehensive content analysis of every primetime broadcast series so that parents can make informed viewing decisions. That fact does not relieve the networks or sponsoring companies from sharing the responsibility for program content, or for the negative influence violent and offensive programming has on young viewers.

As part of our continued commitment to bring responsibility to the entertainment industry, we'd like to provide parents with some practical advice on how to set limitations on children's access to television, how to talk with your children about what they view, and how to set a good example for your children with your own viewing habits:

Advice from the American Medical Association:

- Don't use TV, videos, video games, computer games and music as baby sitters.
- Limit the use of media to no more than two quality hours a day.
- Keep TV and video players out of children's bedrooms, and turn off the TV during mealtime.
- Only watch TV when there is something specifically worth watching.
- Don't make the TV the focal point of the house.
- Watch TV with your children and teach them about advertising and the influence media has.
- Be careful about what your child watches just before bedtime.
- Learn about new movies and videos and set guidelines for your child about what is appropriate.

Be a critical viewer:

- Set a good example: Limit your use of media and be a discriminating viewer.
- Parents affect children's media use by setting an example, by exposing children to television, by watching with their children (or not doing so), and by encouraging or regulating their children's viewing.
- Young children are often present and exposed to the programming watched by their parents.
- Viewing choices are typically guided by the parents' tastes, not those of the children.
- Parents own viewing habits and preferences are a powerful source of modeling and early exposure to television for young children. The amount and kind of television that young children "see" depends considerably on the amount and kind of viewing parents do.
- For young children, exposure to adult programs occurs with parents more than without them.
- Siblings also influence program choices. Children with older siblings move away from educational programs and towards cartoons and situation comedies at an earlier age than those without older siblings.
- Parents or older siblings who co-view television with children can make the experience worthwhile. Adults who watch with children and offer comments and interpretations of content improve the amount that children learn from educational programs. Adult explanation also improves children's understanding of plots, characters, and events in dramatic programs.
- Television can provide an occasion for parents to discuss values, beliefs, and moral issues.