

Positive Effects of Television on Kids

Here are some positive effects of television on children.

By: Alice Langholt

Although many parents may disagree, there are several positive effects of television on children. Most of us with young children grew up watching television. Sesame Street is a PBS classic over 35 years old, with positive ratings for developing literacy, cultural awareness, diversity, imaginative play and ways to deal with feelings. So the American Association of Pediatrics' recommendation that children under the age of two years watch no television at all can be confusing. They further recommend that children between the ages of two and six watch less than two hours of carefully selected programming per day. How do parents reconcile the idea that educational programming has positive attributes and these recommendations? Here are some ways for television to be a positive part of children's lives.

Choose Wisely

The most important thing for parents to do is to choose their children's television viewing wisely. Think of television like food (but less essential to living). Not all food is good for you. For children especially, parents need to choose food with the best nutritional content and avoid too much sugar, or junk food. Television programming needs to be carefully selected as well. This means the content of the show as well as the way the show is presented.

For children under the age of six years, choose commercial-free programming. Commercials break up shows into short segments, which teaches children to have a limited attention span. Public television is usually commercial free, and has some worthwhile children's programming. Additionally, there are many DVDs for children which have content that reinforces literacy skills and other life skills for children.

Content is Important

Some shows for toddlers and young children are cartoons or have no educational value beyond entertainment. Since young children have developing minds, if they will watch television, select content-rich programming. Shows or DVD programs that teach about letters, shapes, imaginative play and use catchy music to teach subjects like manners, sharing, dealing with feelings, and other quality subjects, are ideal choices. Avoid shows that move quickly from scene to scene or include violence of any kind.

Make the Most of TV Time

Watch with your child if you can. Talk to your child about what he is watching. Engage him in follow-up activities to reinforce the skills taught in the show. Sing songs, play literacy games, read with your child. There

are also websites that add enriching material to the content of the TV show, so consider playing them together for a short while. Personal interaction time is extremely important for children so if you can reinforce TV time with quality time together, you'll make the most of the experience.

Limit Time Spent Watching

This is important. Parents can follow the AAP suggestion by providing a rich and diverse selection of opportunities for creative play so television is not the featured source of entertainment. This means having plenty of books, manipulative toys such as Lego blocks and clay, art supplies, puzzles and opportunities to be active on hand for kids to make good choices and develop their learning in active ways for the mind and body.