



Screen Time

For children younger than age two, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages TV and other media use. Depending on the approach you take, using media with your older toddler can be a great way to interact and learn together.

- Watch appropriate content with your child.
 - Be deliberate and choosy about what you watch.
 - Don't just hope there will be something good on when you decide to sit down and watch with your child—know the schedule or record selected programs.
 - If your child is interested in watching something new, make an effort to preview it first to make sure it is appropriate.
- The television isn't the only screen that brings content into your home. The same consistent approach to viewing should apply to all your electronic media devices. Evaluate a new app, game, or device as you would any other book, game, or toy.
- Think of what you are viewing as another way to have a conversation with your child. Talk about what the characters are doing or feeling. Relate what you are watching to what's happening in your child's life.
- Choose short videos or TV show segments. A 15-minute session of viewing and discussion is enough for most two-year-olds.
- Make your viewing active. If characters on the screen are singing, clapping, or dancing, join in and encourage your child to do the same.
- Talk about what you've watched afterwards. Sing the songs together or act out favorite parts. Ask questions that let your child show you what she has learned or help you know what she has understood. Extend the learning by encouraging and answering her questions, finding more information in books or online, or going on related outings.

- New media can offer new opportunities for learning. Toddlers can take and view pictures on a smartphone, and parents and teachers can share photos of the child’s accomplishments and favorite people, places, and activities. Even babies can interact with far-away relatives through a video chat, and may hear a new language or see a different country. Toddler-friendly tablet interfaces make it easy to “read” favorite books.
- Young children have a hard time distinguishing what is real from what isn’t, and may be frightened by images or music that doesn’t bother adults—or they may seem unfazed by things that adults find disturbing. (Don’t assume something is “over his head,” and always be aware of what’s on the screen, such as the news.) If your child accidentally sees something scary, take the time to acknowledge his fears and reassure him that you will keep him safe.
- Don’t put a TV in your child’s bedroom or use TV or videos as a substitute for bedtime stories. Research shows that TV and videos are more likely to keep children awake and contribute to sleep interruptions.
- Limit exposure to advertising. Look for viewing opportunities without ads. Help your child recognize when something is a commercial and answer his questions about products he sees on TV.
- Try not to keep the TV on in the background. Your child may be distracted by it or interrupted in her play. Equally important, it is likely to distract you and others from playing and talking with your child and make it harder to hear and respond to her early words.
- During meals, keep the TV off while family members talk to one another.
- Watching together can be a great learning and bonding experience, but remember that it shouldn’t take the place of play and real-life experiences.