

# Do More...Watch Less: Be Screen Smart

## DO YOUR KIDS WATCH TV WHEN YOU'RE NOT AROUND?

There are times when your child will be in the care of others. This may be when your child is at child care or when a friend or family member is taking care of your child. It can be difficult to feel in control of your child's media viewing during these times. You may even feel that you are unable to make decisions about the time and content of the TV your child is exposed to because you live with other people who make the decisions about how much and what is being watched. This can be a challenge, but you have options.

It can be difficult for a busy care-taker to carefully monitor the screen media your child is viewing, and they may not know how important this issue is to you. In a recent study, researchers found that many children watch as many as two hours a day at home day cares. This time is then added to the time they may be watching at home. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 1-2 hours of quality educational programming per day and no TV for kids under the age of two.

The most important issues to monitor are: how much time and what type of programming your child is watching. Sometimes it's a good idea to create a TV diary for a few days (sample included in newsletter). Ask other people who care for your child throughout the day to participate by recording when and what your child is watching. Once you have an idea of what and how much TV is being watched, you can begin to make decisions about what you want to change about your child's media viewing.

Help educate others about some of the problems caused by too much and the wrong content of TV during early childhood. Share with them the information that excessive TV watching during the preschool years can cause language delay, obesity, attention problems and aggression.



Dr. Michael Rich, director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital in Boston, is understanding of parents and child care providers who put kids in front of the TV. "In general, we still have a culture that sees television as benign," said Rich. He compared our knowledge of TV use to our knowledge of seatbelt use. We are learning a lot and beginning to understand the impact of television on children's development.

Adapted from:  
<http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2009/nov/23/study-kids-watching-hours-tv-home-daycare/>

### KEEP THE TV OFF DURING FAMILY MEALTIMES

- When the TV is on families spend less time interacting with each other
- Meals and snacks eaten in front of the TV often include high calorie, high fat and/or salty foods

# WHAT TO DO!

## STRATEGIES FOR CREATING A MEDIA POLICY:

- Involve the kids in creating a “TV allowance” by letting them help pick specific times and shows
- As a family, choose days that are “TV and computer free”
- Decide together which video games are appropriate, and use the TV Ratings Scale (p. 4)
- Discuss with your children why you have media rules
- Model these habits for your children and your entire household

## IS YOUR CHILD WATCHING TV WHEN YOU ARE NOT THERE?

### HERE ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO:

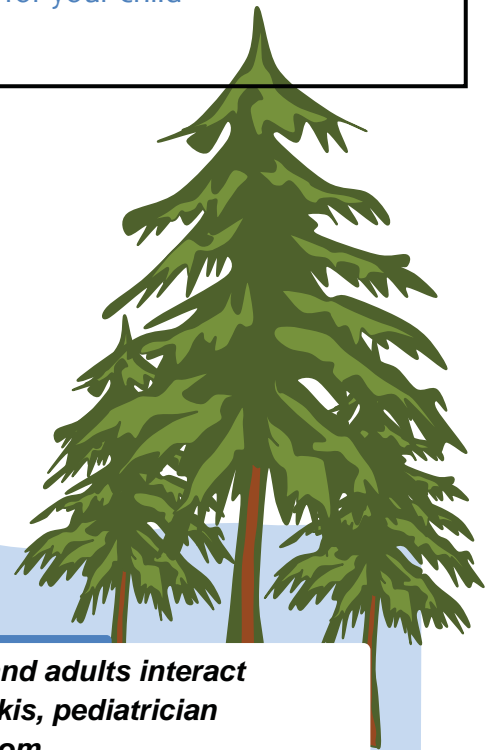
- **Remember you can bring this up!**  
You are your child’s parent and know him or her best. Share this information with your extended family or day care provider. It may help them make better media choices for your child when he or she is in their care.
- **Choose DVDs or videos of your own**  
Ask other family members or child care providers to play your educational programs rather than live TV
- **Ask about TV policies at day care and set standards for your house when your child is home**  
Asking questions and communicating with the people who care for your child can help you create the best situation for your child

*The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children watch no more than 1-2 hours of quality programming per day, and no screen time for children under the age of 2.*

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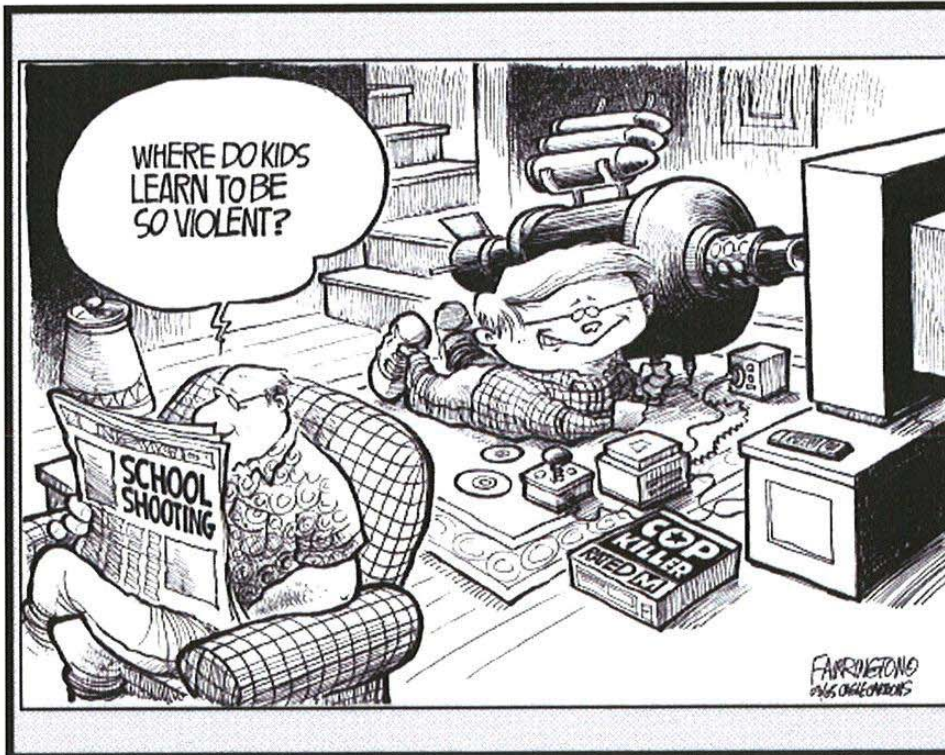
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**“Anytime the TV is on, children speak less and adults interact with them less frequently,” says Dr. Christakis, pediatrician and author of *The Elephant in the Living Room*.**



## Did you know?

Studies show that approximately 60% of TV programs shown between the hours of 6pm and 11pm include violence, and less than 4% include anti-violence themes.



## Can parental rules influence TV viewing?

In a 2006 Kaiser Family Study on electronic media in the lives of families with young children, researchers found that rules are effective:

- Children living in households with rules about TV time are less likely than those without such rules to watch TV in a typical day
- Among those who do watch, those with TV time rules spend less time watching than those without such rules



Sample screen time tracking form: [http://www.montanana.org/docs/TV\\_TrackingForm.pdf](http://www.montanana.org/docs/TV_TrackingForm.pdf)

### Parts of this flyer developed by:

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