

You CAN Control the TV Set!

St. Albert the Great School

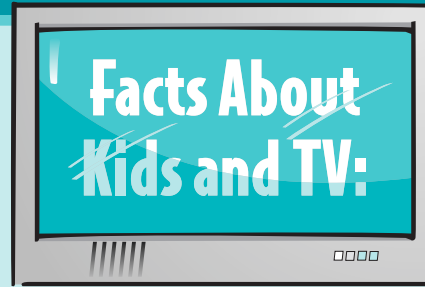


Educators are unanimous in their concern about the negative effects TV can have on children's learning. It's not that TV, computers and video games are damaging in themselves. The problem lies in the number of hours kids spend on screen time rather than reading, playing outside or even just daydreaming.

Here are some practical suggestions on how you can control your child's screen time—and turn her on to learning.

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- Kids spend more time, on average, watching TV and playing video games than they spend in any other activity besides sleeping.
- Ninety-nine percent of American families have TV sets. Sixty-eight percent of students have a TV or computer in their bedroom.
- Eighty-one percent of children ages 2 to 7 watch TV alone and unsupervised.
- Children ages 2 to 5 watch more than 32 hours of TV per week. Kids ages 6 to 11 watch about 28 hours per week.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends *no television at all* for children younger than two years of age and *no more than one to two hours per day* of quality screen time for older children.
- Saturday morning kids' shows feature 20 to 25 violent acts each hour. The average child will see about 8,000 murders depicted on TV before finishing grade school.
- Research shows that children who spend more than 10 hours a week in front of a screen do not read as well as those whose parents set limits on screen time.
- Children ages 6 to 11 spend nearly 2.5 hours per week playing video games.
- Ninety-one percent of elementary schoolers and ninety-seven percent of secondary students use computers regularly.



Use the TV to Motivate Writing

Try using television to encourage your kids to write. As you're watching a television program together, turn off the set for the last 10 minutes of the show and record the ending.

Ask everyone to write their ideas about what might happen. Then compare those endings with what really happened. Which ending did your children like best?

Help Your Kids Learn About TV Ads

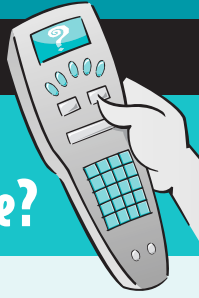
The typical child sees 20,000 TV commercials each year. But most children under the age of nine or 10 don't understand that advertising is meant to sell things.

Explain that advertising is designed for one purpose, and one purpose only—to sell. Try taking a young child to a toy store. Compare the actual toy to what was shown on TV. Help your child realize that "some assembly required" means "you have to put it together."

With an older child, talk about ways ads make a product look good. Is there anything misleading? How could the ad be more realistic—and still sell as well?

A QUIZ:

Are you helping your child manage screen time?



Answer Yes or No:

I set limits on the amount of time my child may spend in front of a screen each day.

YES NO

My child and I choose the TV programs he'll watch each week. At other times, the TV is turned off.

YES NO

My kids have interests besides TV and video games. They play board games, read books or play sports.

YES NO

I monitor my child's use of electronics and keep them out of his room.

YES NO

We watch TV programs together. Then we talk about what we've seen.

YES NO

How did you do?

If you responded *no* to any of these statements, use that idea to promote more responsible screen time habits.

Making the Switch

So you've decided to limit screen time in your home. How can you get started? Here are a few simple ideas:

- Eat dinner as a family and keep the TV off during the meal.
- Preview TV shows before allowing your child to watch them.
- Move your television set to a less prominent location.
- Move the computer to a common area.
- Take the TV and computer out of your child's bedroom.
- Start small. Turn off the TV for 30 minutes each evening.
- Set limits. Fewer than half of all children say their parents set any limits on the amount of time they can spend watching TV or using the computer.

- Post a schedule. Each week sit down with your child. Help her make a chart of her screen time for the coming week.

SCREEN TIME THIS WEEK	
MON	~~~~
TUES	~~~~
WED	~~~~
THU	~~~~
FRI	~~~~
SAT	~~~~
SUN	~~~~



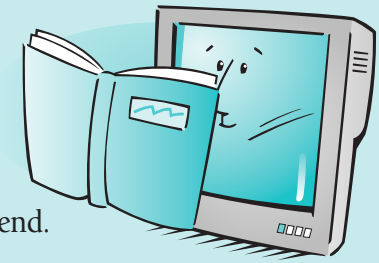
- Expect your child to complete homework before watching TV or playing video games.
- Hide the remote control. If your child can't find the clicker, she may read, play games or get some exercise.
- Be patient. If you can live through 20 minutes of whining, your child WILL find something else to do.

What to Do When The Electronics Are Off

You've kept track of your kids' screen time—and you've decided to set some limits. Expect to hear a lot of complaints, especially at first. Kids who depend on TV or the computer for all their entertainment may simply not know what to do instead.

Here are 10 good ideas you can offer:

1. Read.
2. Work a puzzle.
3. Play a game.
4. Visit a friend.
5. Learn to sew.
6. Go for a walk.
7. Write a letter to a friend.
8. Go for a bike ride.
9. Play a musical instrument.
10. And, of course, do homework!



It May Be Tough, But You CAN Do It!

Getting kids "off" screen time is not easy. There's a period of withdrawal as there is in breaking any habit.

Take the advice of the experts about changing habits and give it 21 days. Tell your kids what you're doing—and ignore their protests. Remind them that you're the adult and you're in charge.

Start today! You're just 21 days away from making a big difference in how well your children learn!

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