

## **TV Tips for Parents**

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### **TV in the Bedroom**

Don't let your child have a TV in their room! This is important! In fact, let us repeat that advice:

**DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD HAVE A TV IN THEIR ROOM!**

As parents we want to do the best for our kids, but encouraging children to spend solo time in front of the box is not doing them any favours. The more TV your child watches, the less likely they are to do well in school and the greater their chance of becoming overweight. A TV in your child's bedroom may also interfere with their sleep patterns, leading to tired, sluggish mornings.

OK, having a TV in the bedroom may keep your kids quiet, but you lose control over what and how much they watch. A recent study found that children who had a TV in their bedroom watched more TV and performed worse in school tests ([click here for more info on this issue](#)).

If your child already has a TV in their bedroom, you may have a job on your hands to get it out. If your child is young enough, we recommend that you just remove the TV and explain your reasons to your child. Be prepared for protests, but remember that you are acting in the best interests of your child.

### **Don't have the TV on as background noise!**

If no-one's watching it, turn the telly off! Save power as well as your brain! TV has an amazing effect on us. We instinctively pay attention to moving images, so when a TV is on it is difficult to concentrate on other things. You may be chatting to one of the family, but it will be almost impossible to avoid glancing at the TV now and again. Remember, the "off" button is there for a reason.

### **Don't Allow Unsupervised Access**

Do you really know what the kids are watching? Many studies have shown that children can be exposed to violent and sexual imagery that is inappropriate for their age. Keep track of what your kids are watching, and avoid having loads of TV sets around the house. [Click here for ideas on activities to replace the TV.](#)

### **Agree Programmes**

Buy a TV guide, and agree in advance which programmes your children will watch. This won't take long, and will save your children from hours of zombie-like channel surfing. Most Sunday newspapers have a weekly TV guide

included. Set rules for acceptable programmes together, and develop a list of programmes to be watched.

### **Time...**

Agree with your children how much time the family will spend watching TV during the week. If your children are hopeless telly addicts, you will need to reduce their screen time gradually! The most important thing for telly addicts is to replace TV time with something else...[click here for ideas](#).

### **Assess the Situation**

Keep a TV log for a week, and work out how much time you and your children spend in front of the box. Just write down the number of hours of TV you've watched...you may find this surprising.

### **Use Your Video Recorder**

Videotape movies and programmes that you like, and watch them at convenient times. This can help to minimise the effect that TV has on your family's sleeping and eating patterns.

### **Discuss the Plan**

Explain to your children the reason why too much TV is a bad idea, and get their opinions. This is crucial, since you want your children to develop good TV habits that they will take with them into adulthood. Don't be too dictatorial, and explain your actions. Your children will get into the habit of being discerning viewers.

You have to walk a fine line between being an understanding boss to your children and being a dictator. You ARE the boss, and you need to take a lead...but you have to bring your children with you. If your children are very young, this will not be a problem...they will just accept your rules as being normal.

### **Encourage Rebellion!**

OK, this might sound crazy...but here is the plan. Your kids are going to rebel against something so why not make this a positive process? We all like to think of ourselves as free-thinking individuals. Point out to your child or young adult that the TV keeps them passive and under control. This may be enough to spark a change. Your children probably won't like the idea of being passive zombies controlled by others, and they may react against the TV.

### **Cut the Cable...**

...or get rid of the dish. As Bruce Springsteen once said: "57 channels and nothin' on". The adverts for cable/satellite packages often try to make you feel

like some kind of sad, uninteresting person if you don't have the latest channels. In reality, the opposite is usually true. One recent advert even ridiculed someone for having hobbies. Is it really so "cool" to sit doing nothing, passively absorbing what others want you to see? Why not get rid of your satellite TV, and with the money you save, rent the odd movie that you're really keen on? You'll be able to watch your movie at a more convenient time, you won't be bombarded with adverts, and you will probably save money. Treat yourself to a dvd or video that the whole family would like...you control what you're watching, and your kids will enjoy watching as a family.

### **TV Dinners**

Don't eat in front of the telly! TV plays havoc with your appetite. because you are looking at the box, you find it harder to keep track of how full-up you are, and you may eat more than you need. Try not to snack whilst watching TV. Alright, the odd bit of popcorn during a movie is OK...rules were made to be broken, after all...but don't let your family routinely eat meals in front of the TV.

### **Keep Perspective**

You don't have to ditch the TV completely, although believe it or not some people take this option and live perfectly normal lives. TV isn't all bad...you can see great movies, there are fantastic educational documentaries for kids, and there are great comedy and entertainment shows to keep you and your kids entertained (this writer is a big fan of "The Simpsons"). Just make sure that you have TV under control...not the other way around.

### **Are YOU A Telly Addict?**

You are the most important role model to your children. If you watch too much TV, the chances are your children will too. You should also think of your own health...some good reasons for cutting down your screen time can be found here.

Some scientists think that you can have an addiction to TV, in the true sense of the word. If you find yourself doing any of the following, maybe it's time to cut back on your own TV habit:

- You cut short social events to go home and watch TV
- You watch TV out of habit, not interest
- You turn the TV on in the morning, and leave it on all day
- You channel-surf
- You cut short intimate time with your partner to watch TV