7. Set limits!

Monitor how much TV your child watches. Many parents decide to keep TV watching to less than two hours a day. Block the channels you do not want your child to see through your cable provider.

8. Set a good example!

Limit the amount of TV you watch, and you may suddenly have time for old friends and new hobbies.

Finding quality TV

Children learn from everything they are exposed to, for better or worse. How do you recognize TV programs that are good for kids? Watch for programs that:

- discuss issues important to youngsters, in terms they understand
- encourage children to explore their concerns and feelings
- are entertaining as well as informative
- do not exploit children’s feelings of envy, anger, or competitiveness, or promote stereotypes

We don’t understand the full impact on children and families of heavy TV viewing, but we do know that it takes up a great deal of time in many homes. Are you using TV or is TV using you?
The impact of TV on children and families continues to be a hotly debated issue. Let’s look at how important TV has become! In the U.S.:

- Ninety-nine out of 100 homes today have at least one TV set.
- The average TV set is on for 6.2 hours a day.
- Most two- to five-year-olds watch more than four hours of TV a day.
- By the time young people graduate from high school, they will have spent more time watching TV than any other activity except sleeping.

The time that your child spends watching TV is time he doesn’t spend reading, socializing, or playing outside.

Children who watch a lot of TV are likely to be heavier, slower to learn, less creative, and more aggressive than their peers. When they watch violent shows, they may develop strong fears or even become immune to violence on TV and in real life. This is why experts recommend that parents limit TV-watching.

However, if TV time is structured correctly, it can be a positive experience. The following guidelines can help.

1. **Turn TV time into family time.**
   
   Put the TV in a family room instead of the kitchen, dining room, or a child’s room. Watching TV in these rooms will stop conversation and isolate you from each other. Discuss characters, what happened to them, and why it happened. Ask your child how he would change the show.
   
   Spending time talking about TV can strengthen your relationship with your child. It can also give you the chance to share your feelings and find out your child’s feelings about hard subjects (drugs, sex, divorce, etc.).

2. **Talk back to the TV.**
   
   When you see something on TV that conflicts with your values, say it out loud. Soon your children may catch on and start thinking about and questioning the programs they watch. Discuss why your family has its own values, beliefs, and home rules.

3. **Do a “reality check.”**
   
   Can your child tell the difference between TV programs and reality? Does he know that wrestling moves are dangerous in real life? Does he realize that toys don’t walk and talk the way they do in commercials? Explain to him that some situations are make-believe.

4. **Make TV a choice, not a habit!**
   
   Choose programs to watch instead of watching whatever is on. Make sure that your children do other activities sometimes, such as riding bikes, playing an instrument, or reading.

5. **Apply what they learn to real life.**
   
   Plan follow-up activities to watching TV such as trips to the library, zoo, museum, or even the backyard. Seeing animal and plant life close-up will expand the meaning of nature programs. Having your child write and/or draw about what he thought about the program can enhance his creativity.

6. **Teach your child to be a good consumer.**
   
   Spend one night a month listing products shown on TV commercials. Help your child decide on one product to buy and see whether it “lives up” to its TV commercial. This activity works best and is cheapest when using food commercials.

   Teach your child to be a good consumer by helping him recognize a sales pitch.