



A Guide to Manage Television: Tips for Parents



Do you want to limit the amount of time you're family spends watching TV? Here are a few tips from the University of Michigan Health System (www.med.umich.edu):

*Make very specific rules about when children can and cannot watch TV. For example, don't allow TV during meals, homework or when parents aren't around.

*The American Association of Pediatricians (AAP) guidelines recommend that parents limit their children's viewing to one to two hours per day at most.

*Alternative is to limit TV to one hour on school nights and two to three hours a day on weekend.

*You may want to allow a little extra viewing time for special educational programs.

*Make it a rule that children must finish homework and chores before watching. If your child's favorite show is on before the work can be done, then record it to show later.

*The best rule is no TV during the week and limited weekend TV. This ensures that kids aren't rushing to finish homework or chores so they can watch a favorite show. It also frees up more time for family interaction during the busy weekdays. For example, instead of parking the kids in front of the TV while you prepare dinner, have them help you get ready for dinner. Even young children can slice a cu-

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Is Your Child A Biter

Do you have a biter on your hands? Biting is very common among young children. It happens for different reasons with different children and under different circumstances. Children bite for several reasons:

*Exploration - tasting or "mouthing" things is something all children do and they don't understand the difference between gnawing on a toy and biting someone

*Teething - infants find relief from swollen gums by chewing on something or someone

*Cause and effect - what happens when they do something, i.e. they bite and hear a loud scream

*Attention - biting is a quick way to become the center of attention

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Fingerprints

A Newsletter about Little Hands and Those Who Care for Them

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cumber with a dull knife or put silverware on the table.

To keep TV from dominating your family life:

*Keep it off during family mealtimes. Eating in front of the TV starts a bad habit and reinforces kids' dependence on TV. Research shows that eating while watching TV has an even worse effect of "hooking" children to TV.

*Make conversation a priority in your home. Interacting more will help children improve their conversational skills as well as improve your relationship with your kids and keep the lines of communication open.

*Read to your children. Begin reading by the time your children are age 1. Encourage older kids to read on their own but don't stop reading aloud to them. Show your kids that

you enjoy reading by letting them see you read rather than watch TV.

*Don't use TV as a reward or punishment. This gives the TV too much value and takes value away from what they had to do to earn TV time.

*Encourage active recreation. Encourage your kids to take part in sports, games, hobbies and music. For example, you may want to turn off the TV and take a walk or do a project with your child. Designate specific evenings for special family activities such as a family bike ride or game night.

*Don't use TV as a distraction or babysitter for preschool children. You can still get things done around the house without turning on the TV to occupy your kids. Try to involve them in what you are doing. If you're folding laundry, let your

child match socks. If your older kids are doing homework, give your little one "homework" to do alongside them. Alternatives to TV include puzzles, play dough, board games, crayons, markers, magazines, cutting and pasting, dress-up and reading.

*Get the TV out of your children's bedrooms. A third of kids aged 2 to 7 and two-thirds of kids aged 8 and up have TVs in their bedrooms. Placing a TV in your child's room keeps you from monitoring the amount of TV and the types of shows that they watch. For kids, having a TV in the bedroom is linked to doing worse in school and sleep problems. If your child complains that all their friends have TVs in their rooms, remind them that you do what you feel is best for them because you love them.

Five Meaningful Holiday Traditions for Children

Do you get lost in all of the chaos of preparing for the holidays? For most of us, this stress can stay with us long after guest leave and the last new gift is put away. If you usually equate the holidays with shopping with the crowds, why not take a new approach this year? Here are five things you can do to create meaningful traditions that your children will appreciate more than any stocking stuffer or toy. But here's the best part: most are free.



Write an annual letter to your child. The holidays are a great time to mark your child's growth with a special message that will be cherished for a lifetime. Include your observations as well as your hopes for their future. Make sure you date the letter. Seal them and store in a keepsake box until your child is old enough to read and enjoy them.

Do a Secret Santa gift exchange for charity. When you draw names to determine who's buying for whom, turn the tables. Instead of buying a gift, make a donation or spend time volunteering for a charity of the giftee's choice. We've done this every year since our kids were young and expanded it to school supply drives a few years ago. Find activities appro-

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*Imitation - they see others bite and decide to try it themselves

*Independence - biting is a powerful way to control others

*Frustration - growing up is hard!

*Stress - biting is a way to express feelings and relieve tension

When a child bites, use your voice and facial expressions to show it's unacceptable. Speak firmly and look directly into the child's eyes. For example, you might say, "Claire, it's not OK to bit. It hurts Jon when you bite him. He's crying. If you need to bite, bite this teething ring. I won't let you bite him or another child." Another example: "You can tell Jon with your words that you would like for him to move instead of biting him. Say 'Move, Jon.'"

You might also want the biter to help wash, bandage and comfort the victim. Making the biter a part of the comforting process is a good way to teach nurturing behavior. When the biter is out of control, you'll need to restrain or isolate the child until he/she calms down. Wait a few minutes until the child is under control and then talk to him/her about their behavior.

Biting is a difficult and uncomfortable issue to deal with. If your child is the victim, you may be angry and outraged. If your child is the biter, you may feel embarrassed and frustrated. Just remember that most toddlers who bite only do so a short time. Paying close attention to the reasons will help you come up with some solutions. Soon your toddler will have learned important new skills for communicating and getting along with others.

Source: Lesia Oesterreich, Extension Family Life Specialist, Iowa State University Extension.

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appropriate for the youngest members of your family so everyone can get into the spirit of serving. Make sure you discuss this with your children by using age-appropriate messages about why helping others is important.

Make a family walk an annual event. Whether you have a houseful of family members or it's just you, your spouse and children, walking is a great way to spend time with each other, let off steam, and work off those extra gingerbread cookies. Set aside time, even if it's only 20 or 30 minutes, to get outside and stretch your legs with the family. Before you go out, make a scavenger hunt-like list of tasks for your kids. They can listen for different bird sounds, find different types of leaves or feel the texture of bark on several trees.

Leave a legacy that lasts and helps the environment. Each New Year's Day, plant a tree in honor of your children. Hold a special ceremony in which everyone in the family plays a part in planting that year's tree and take lots of photos, both when the tree is planted and over the years as it grows. There are several benefits to this. Research shows that kids who spend time outdoors grow up healthier, happier and smarter than kids who don't. If you don't have space for a tree in your yard, consider planting the tree at a family member or friend.

Take part in a community service project as a family. Designate a day that will be devoted to serving others in the community. Create a list of local options and then vote on the project you'll complete as a family. There are lots of opportunities in every community.

Whatever traditions you and your family create this year, remember to relax and have fun. Your kids will remember the memories you make together more than any doll or video game they receive. And the lessons you teach them about giving back will last a lifetime.

Source: Bethany Hardy, www.pbs.org/parents

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The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a unique education agency with a statewide network of professional educators, trained volunteers, and county offices. It reaches into every Texas county to address local priority needs. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offers practical information for families: raising children, housing and environment, eating well, managing money, and staying healthy.

Cooking with Kids

Snowballs

Beginning cooks can make these with little supervision. No knives or ovens are needed as long as the pecans are already chopped.

- 2 ¼ cups chocolate sandwich cookie crumbs
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans
- ¾ cup sifted powdered sugar
- 1/3 cup sweetened flaked coconut (optional)
- ¼ cup light corn syrup
- ¼ cup strawberry preserves
- ¾ cup sifted powdered sugar

Combine cookie crumbs, pecans, ¾ cup powdered sugar and coconut in a large bowl. Add corn syrup and preserves. Stir until well blended. Shape mixture into 1-inch balls, using 1 level teaspoon of mixture for each. Roll balls in ¾ cup powdered sugar. Roll each ball again so it will be coated very well. Store cookies in an airtight container up to 1 week. Makes about 28 cookies. .Per serving: 111 calories, 4.7 g fat, 1 g protein, 17.4 g carbohydrate, 85 mg sodium.



Baby Carrots

With a little supervision, your child can make these.

- 1 ½ pounds baby carrots
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine, cut into small pats
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon coarse salt or ½ teaspoon regular salt

Place baby carrots in ½-inch water with butter, sugar and salt. Bring to a boil, cover pan and reduce heat to simmer. Cook for 7 or 8 minutes, remove lid and raise heat to medium high. Reduce water until it almost evaporates, about 2 minutes. Stir until carrots are coated with sauce. Taste to adjust seasonings and serve. Serves 4.