



What Kids Get From TV

There is no simple formula for choosing the programs your children watch. But there are some things we do know that can help us understand how TV affects children.



What People—Young or Old—Get From the Television Depends on Four Things:

✓ **How much you watch**

Nearly all researchers agree that heavy viewing (more than 10-20 hours a week) isn't good for people. Watching too much keeps us from doing other important activities and it can over-expose us to television's sometimes negative messages. Television is powerful because it can repeat messages hundreds of times each day. So, the more we watch TV, the more we are influenced by it.

✓ **What you watch**

Television teaches every time it is on. What we see on TV can be very influential, especially if we believe what we are seeing is real or true. Young children are likely to think that TV shows us what the real world is like. This is especially true for preschoolers, who don't have the ability to understand time or distance; they think that what they see on TV is happening in their neighborhood.

✓ **Who you are**

How we see things depends on our experiences and personality. Two people can get very different messages from the same program. The most powerful messages tend to be those that are reinforced by things in real life. For example, a child who watches a violent cartoon and who is also a hockey fan is more likely to copy the aggressive behavior s/he sees on TV than a child who watches the same violent cartoon but who sees no other violence.

✓ **How you watch**

Different people have different viewing styles. One is not necessarily better than another, but the differences do mean that TV viewing doesn't fulfill the same needs for all children. When TV viewing is "active"—asking questions, talking back to the set or with one another—children learn language and critical thinking skills while they view.

When TV viewing is quiet time—and it is considered rude to interrupt someone who is watching—children need other opportunities to practice language and thinking skills.

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