

PARENTING

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TIPS

Seven Tips to Tame the TV Monster in Your Home

From *10 Building Blocks to a Happy Family* by Jim Burns.

1. Don't use the TV as a baby-sitter. Usually, parents are extremely careful about choosing a baby-sitter and a day care for their children. Why are we not as careful about choosing the programs our children watch on TV?

2. Know what shows your kids are watching on TV. It is vitally important to know the content of every program your child watches. For younger children, videos are much easier to monitor. Ask the question, 'Is the content in line with our moral guidelines?' If TV is not working to enhance your values, it may just be working to oppose your values – and charging you a lot for it. Throw away the remote, or at least save it only for Dad, when he must watch two football games at the same time!

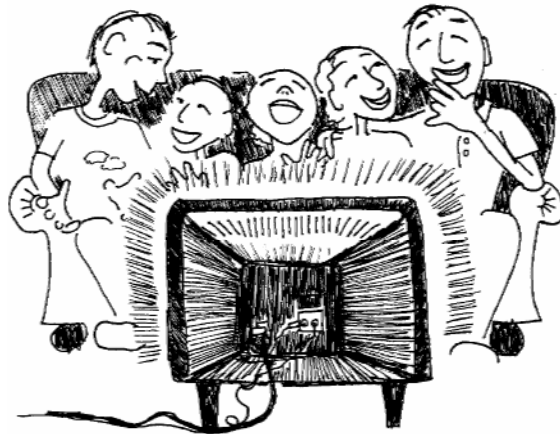
3. Don't put a TV in your child's bedroom. A TV in your child's bedroom is a big no-no. You won't be able to monitor the content, and your kids will be drawn to their rooms at the expense of family interaction. A TV in the bedroom is a far too attractive temptation that easily interrupts such important matters as sleep, schoolwork, reading and interaction with others.

4. Set limits on TV time. What are your guidelines, rules and expectations for TV viewing? Can your children watch TV before school? How about before homework is finished? How many hours a day can the TV be on? Setting limits may be a challenge to your whole family, but when the limits are followed consistently, the results make them well worth it.

5. Make an appointment with the TV. It's a good idea to be proactive about your TV use and misuse. Many healthy families pull out the TV guide on a weekly basis and make TV appointments for the week. This monitors what shows your family is watching and how often, and it can make watching a TV program a family activity. Not too much butter on the popcorn though! Mom and Dad, why don't you make appointments with the TV, too? What children see, children do.

6. Dialogue with your children about TV shows. All television is educational. The question is, 'What does it teach?' Recently, I gave in to watching a movie on TV under the condition that afterward we would discuss it and react to it. Thankfully, the movie wasn't as gross as I thought it would be, and together we debriefed the themes and content over frozen yogurt. We turned a mediocre movie into a first-rate learning experience.

7. Make the VCR your friend. If you can't watch the few good shows on TV because of your family's schedule, then tape them and watch them as a family – the VCR can be your friend.



Discriminating program choices enhanced the Jones' family life.

Television: some negatives	Television: some positives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Television is a source of significant parent child conflict. On some surveys television is the greatest cause of arguments in an average home. ○ Violence and sexually charged scenes are shown to affect normal people negatively. They can affect a small proportion of persons very badly. ○ The passivity of TV watching can lead to developmental problems. ○ The curiosity of channel surfing is habit forming. ○ Television in the centre of the lounge room can become the centre of the home and of family life by default. ○ Viewing is habit forming so viewing should not be a major part of the children's week. Television cannot be the staple entertainment in a home. Happiness cannot depend on television. ○ Television in a child's bedroom exposes a young person to unreasonable influences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Television can be educational. ○ Television can open minds and enhance solidarity with the less fortunate. ○ Television can give teenagers important practice in decision making and in making choices. ○ Family life can be enhanced by appropriate use of television. ○ Television is not going to go away. Banning television is not an option. ○ Parental example is always the most effective teacher. ○ Television gives parents the chance to engage in discussion with teenagers on decision making and on key topics. ○ Television policy in the home gives mum and dad a chance to give consistent messages. ○ Family television policy provides an opportunity for children to learn that self imposed limits are necessary in life.

Some realities about raising children

- Children are by nature impressionable. Plato wrote *“Anything a child receives into his mind is likely to become indelible and unalterable”*. He believed that a child was like a fresh wax writing tablet. Every scratch or mark on that surface would be very hard to erase. In the same way, he said, every early experience of a child was virtually permanent.
- He understood that opportunities in childhood to learn quickly and easily must not be lost. He wrote, *“The beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender child. For that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken.”*
- It can help to reflect that the aim in raising children is to help them think for themselves, to put their freedom to good use and, ultimately, to give glory to God through their actions. One task in raising children is to give them a clear idea of what is right and what is wrong. Homer has the son of Odysseus proclaim to his mother, *“Mother I now know the difference between right and wrong, I am no longer a child”*.
- A key principle for all parents is to manage the inputs in the life of their children. Aristotle wrote, *“Remove indecent pictures and speech from the stage and from the sight and hearing of the young.”*
- The bottom line is that TV and technology can bring families together or they can put them under more pressure. It is up to parents to put structures in place so that the impact of television and technology in their own homes is a positive one.

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