

Mind Over Media: a summary of parent strategies

Try these parent strategies to help your preschooler get the most out of their media experiences:

1 Be actively involved with your preschooler's media experiences

Depending on their age, children vary in their perception of the world. Very young children will pick up that something bad is happening, but will not be able to understand. Older children are at great risk because they know this event is real but have not yet learnt to distance themselves as much as adults or even adolescents can. With these children talk to them as much as they seem to need, ask them questions and listen, explore their capacity to apply rational thinking to what they have seen in the media. Contact the Young Media Australia Helpline (1800 700 357) to find out more about the response suitable for the developmental stage of your child.

2 Teach media literacy

Ask questions like:

- What did you think about that show / game?
- What was pretend and what was real? How could you tell?
- What do you think about how this character solved their problem? If you had a problem like that, what would you do / say? Can you think of a peaceful way to solve that problem?
- What tricks are they using to make you think that toy is really good?

3 Model good media use

“Don't worry that your children don't listen to what you say; worry that they are watching what you do”.

Have your own TV free days, be discriminating about what you watch, avoid programs that show human nature at its worst, not its best.

4 Provide opportunities for your child to develop self esteem

Tell your child constantly that you love them for who they are. Remind them that it is who they are inside that is important, not how they look or what they have.

Give them opportunities to develop mastery, whether it is by hitting a ball, painting a drawing or playing a simple problem solving computer game.

Avoid commercial television—it teaches children false messages about how to be happy.

5 No television before the age of two.

Relationships are the most important developmental task before the age of two, and the foundation for later learning in all areas. Very young children need responsive environments and TV doesn't respond. Spending time in front of a television only takes away from these tasks, and can distract the caregiver.

6 Limit how much time older preschoolers spend with the media

Limit total screen time to one hour per day. Relationships, socio-emotional, language, and cognitive skills, self-confidence and a realistic view of the world are best learnt through play, real world interaction and relationships with others. Too much media cuts into the time they have available to do all of this learning, and encourages a passive attitude to learning.

7 Seek out quality media. Avoid the mediocre and the bad.

There are many excellent television programs, movies, DVDs, videos and computer games that will entertain and educate your child. Seek them out and only allow only those into your home. Talk about the reasons for

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not allowing your child to watch some programs. Watch one with them every now and then, and help them discover the reasons for themselves.

8 No violent media

Craig Anderson, noted media violence researcher, says “Children learn. Content matters”. Violent media can:

- teach children aggressive behaviours and attitudes
- desensitise them to violence
- create a fear of being a victim of violence

Avoid all violent media.

9 No food ads

Junk food advertising works. It is one of many factors that is contributing to making Australian children fatter. Avoid commercial television and the misleading messages it gives your child about what foods are fun to eat and “good for them”.

10 Keep TV and computers out of children’s bedrooms

Media is best experienced in public, where you can see what’s happening, check reactions, impose some limits, and use the “teachable moment” .

**Media is here to stay and will be part
of your children’s lives more than
you could ever have imagined.
Teach your children to expect inspiration,
education, laughter and compassion
from their media experiences: to expect
the best and and leave the rest.**



For more information about Children and the Media, call the
Young Media Australia Helpline

Up to date and reliable information for parents and caregivers

1800 700 357

Freecall anywhere in Australia, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Or go to the Young Media Australia website

www.youngmedia.org.au

Ordering more fact sheets

Young Media Australia has over sixty printed fact sheets about the impact of media on children.

You can browse the fact sheets in topic format online or download a fact sheet order form from our web site

www.youngmedia.org.au

or call the **Young Media Australia Helpline**
1800 700 357 for a list of available YMA fact sheets or to order copies.