

TELEVISION VIEWING TIPS

Television is a big part of our culture, and most young children will watch some television every day. Parents can make watching T.V. a learning experience by following some of these tips:

- **Limit time spent watching.** Young children learn by doing and time spent in front of the television takes away from time spent in imaginative play. Research suggests that children should watch no more than an hour or two a day (Aidman, 1997). Recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics has suggested that children under the age of two should watch no television at all (2004). It is easy to use the T.V. as a babysitter, but you can limit the amount of T.V. your child watches by setting up clear rules for when and how long the T.V. will be turned on in your house.
- **Watch television with your child.** This helps you to become familiar with what your child is watching and your child will learn much more if you watch together. Watching shows together helps you answer questions or explain new words. Ask your child how they thought a character felt, or what they would do in the same situation.
- **Watch for T.V. violence.** Many cartoons and children's programs show angry behavior and violence. Studies over the past 40 years find three areas that have an effect on children (Aidman, 1997):
 1. T.V. violence can teach children angry behavior.
 2. T.V. violence can make children afraid about the real world.
 3. T.V. violence can make children less sensitive to real-world violence.Of course, this means as a parent you need to be careful about what you watch if your children are in the room! Even the evening news can contain scary images. If a show is scary or upsetting, simply turn off the television and talk to your child about why you turned it off.

Aidman, Amy (1997). *Television Violence: Content, Context, and Consequences*, *ERIC Digest*, EDO-PS-97-26.
- **Help your children to be critical of what they see on T.V.** Young children have a hard time knowing what is real and what is pretend. Parents can help by pointing out the differences. Older children can begin to learn how commercials make customers want to buy their products.

