

PARENTING

TIPS

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Mind over Media

**A summary of parent strategies
from Young Media Australia's Fact Sheet series.**

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 leave the rest. 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

Be actively involved when your preschooler watches TV and plays computer games. This will enhance their learning, minimise harm from scary stuff and help them 'reality check' what they are seeing. Most importantly it provides you with an opportunity to build your relationship with them.

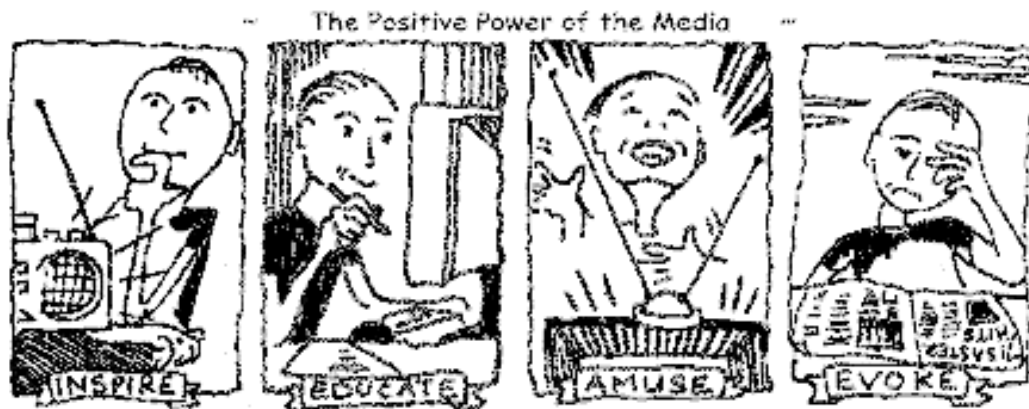
2. Teach media literacy

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 ----- 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 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 will cut 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 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 and is 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".

Source. [http:// www.youngmedia.org.au](http://www.youngmedia.org.au)

Young Media Australia (YMA) *Mind Over Media* Fact Sheet series

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