



CANADA'S CENTRE
FOR DIGITAL AND
MEDIA LITERACY

Managing Television in the Home

Television watching should be a fun and relaxing activity for kids and adults alike—but too often it's a source of family conflict.

If you're concerned about television, banning it isn't a practical solution. Instead, you need to learn to co-exist with television by managing how much your kids watch, and what.

Take control of your family's viewing habits by using some of these strategies:

- Start young. It's wise to work on developing good TV viewing habits well before your children start school. As they grow older, it will become more difficult for you to enforce restrictions or influence their tastes.
- Limit the amount of time your kids spend watching television, especially on school nights. Make sure they're involved in other activities such as sports, hobbies and playing outside.
- Monitor what your children watch, and whenever possible watch with them and discuss the program.
- Kids model their behaviour on that of their parents—so take a hard look at your own viewing habits, and if necessary, change them.
- Encourage your children to watch a variety of programs: sports, nature and science shows, the arts, music and history shows. There's a lot of great TV programming out there that makes learning about the world interesting and fun.
- Consider the best place for your television set. When your children are small, use the old adage "out of sight, out of mind"—and keep the TV in a room away from where your family spends most of its time. When your kids get older, you might want it to be in a more visible place for easier monitoring. Never put a television set in a child's bedroom!
- Don't leave your TV on when you're not watching it. Turn it on for a specific show, and turn it off again when the show is over. This makes television a special experience that your children can look forward to.
- When your children's friends come to visit, insist on some "no-TV" time. Don't be afraid to restrict viewing of certain shows, even if your children's friends are allowed to watch them. You have the right to protect your children from inappropriate viewing and they will accept your concern as a sign of caring.
- Make sure your kids know that it's their right to say no to programs they find too frightening when visiting friends or relatives.



- Tell the parents of your children's friends about your television rules. It's hard to control what your children see at other houses, but if parents talk about their TV rules with others, it's easier to protect children from unsuitable programming.
- Make sure your caregiver or sitter knows about, and follows, your TV rules.
- Try going without television for a few days to help you re-evaluate the role it plays in your family's life. You can also join thousands of others and give up TV for a week during the annual [Screen-Free Week](#) event.
- Learn about the Canadian and U.S. television ratings systems by viewing [Understanding Television Rating Systems and Codes](#).

