



Early Learning Digest

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Electronic Media and Young Children

Young children spend an average of 2 hours and 14 minutes a day with “screen media.” Here are some questions many parents have about how electronic media impacts pre-schoolers’ lives:

If the content is “educational,” is it good for kids? There is a wide variation in programs labeled “educational.” Many parents assume children can comprehend what is said in the program, but the way the information is presented can actually get in the way of children learning.

Are children affected by TV sound in the background? Research shows a significant difference in the way children play with their toys when the TV is on. They spend less time with each toy and the TV, whether it is the noise or flash of images, interferes with their play.

Is all media for children under age 2 damaging? For children under age 2, screen time isn’t damaging if it leads to social interactions between child and parent and does not replace those interactions.

Do scary movies and TV programs go over young children’s heads? No. In fact, these can influence children’s sleep and more. Studies show that children who performed poorly on cognitive tests at age 4 were the same children who were put in front of adult-directed TV when they were 1 year old.



Are E-books distracting to young children? Many e-books come with so many bells and whistles that children merely click around on the screen without paying attention to the storyline. However, if parents focus on the storyline and content, instead of telling kids when and where to click, e-books are no different or better than traditional storybooks.

A positive approach to electronic media requires parents to stress the importance of content, context, and the individual child (the three C’s). Ask yourself if your child can follow the story and absorb its lessons. Focus on social interaction and conversation while using electronic media, and tune in to your child’s unique needs, fostering curiosity and exploration.

Source: “How is Screen Time and Interactive Media Affecting My Child’s Development? What Parents Want and Need to Know,” a webinar presented by Lisa Guernsey, Early Education Initiative. To view archived webinar, visit www.workingfam.org/resource.

Block Play for Children

A set of building blocks is one of the most versatile toys for young children. It’s an open-ended toy because it can be used in many different ways and over a long span of a child’s development.

Through block play children experiment with abstract concepts using concrete materials. They explore concepts like patterning, symmetry, balancing, and fractions by playing with the blocks and finding out what works. When groups of children play with blocks together, they may also learn social skills as they express their ideas, problem-solve, and collaborate.

Most children proceed through stages of block building. Very young children may carry blocks around rather than building something. Next they build horizontal rows or vertical stacks. Bridging a block over two others is the next stage, followed by creating an enclosure. Then children begin to make decorative patterns that are often symmetrical. After that they begin dramatic play related to their buildings and may try to copy structures they know.

The best blocks are made of a hard wood or a material that won’t splinter or break easily. Good blocks can be an heirloom to pass on to future generations.

Source: The Importance of Block Play for Young Children, Julia Toone, 2012, and articles from NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children.)

Test your knowledge: Electronic Media and Young Children.

- T F Programs labeled “educational” always help young children to learn faster.
- T F Background noise from TV does not affect young children's play or social interactions.
- T F The amount and type of children’s screen time may affect their sleep patterns.
- T F Used appropriately, focusing on social interaction and conversation, e-books are no different than traditional storybooks.

Answers: 1) F, 2) F, 3) T, 4) T



Parent to Parent

Everyday Parent to Parent Forum is a bulletin board for Minnesota parents to ask questions or to share what they have learned. Join the discussion forum at www.MNParentsKnow.info.



Five Important Reasons to Immunize Your Child

Getting your child immunized not only protects your child, but also protects others who come in contact with them. Immunizations prevent disease and none of us want to see our children get sick. One of the best ways to protect your child is to make sure they have all of their vaccinations.



Immunizations can save your child’s life. Your child can be protected against more diseases than ever before because of medical advances.

Vaccination is safe and effective. Vaccination discomfort is minimal compared to the pain, discomfort, and trauma of the diseases these vaccines prevent. Despite many news scares, scientific studies have not found a link between vaccines and autism.

Immunization protects others you care about. It is important that you and your children who are able to get vaccinated are fully immunized. This protects your family, but also helps prevent the spread of these diseases to others.

Immunizations can save your family time and money. A child with a vaccine-preventable disease must be kept home. Getting vaccinated against these diseases is a good investment and usually covered by insurance. The Vaccines for Children program is a federally funded program for those unable to pay that provides vaccines at no cost to children.

Immunization protects future generations. Vaccines have eliminated some diseases that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago.

For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/media/subtopic/matte/pdf/CDCFiveReasonstoVaccinateYourChild.pdf>.



help me

If you have concerns about your child’s growth and development, please talk to your child’s health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

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