

Using Screen Media With Young Children

Research shows that children’s learning from media can be greatly enhanced when parents and other adults join in and make it a shared experience. The following tips offer a range of ways you can use screen media to make it an interactive, more enriching learning experience.

Watch Together

- ❑ Talk about what you are viewing. “The bear is so hungry. He is eating everything up!”
- ❑ For children older than 2 years, ask questions to engage their thinking skills. “Who is hiding behind the tree?” “What do you think will happen next?” “Where did the dog go now?”
- ❑ Get your child moving whenever possible. Act out what you see the characters on the screen doing. If they are playing ball, take out a ball and roll it back and forth, or have your child toss it into a bucket. If the fish on the screen are swimming, stand up with your child and move your arms to pretend you are swimming, too.

Play Screen-Based Games Together

- ❑ Whenever possible, make the experience interactive. Take turns to teach your child about sharing and cooperating.
- ❑ Talk about what your child is doing as she plays the game to make it a more language-rich experience. Describe what the characters or objects are doing, the impact of your child’s actions, the goal of the game.
- ❑ Use games and apps as an opportunity to teach persistence. When your child loses, acknowledge that games can be challenging and then help him think through how he might approach it differently, encouraging him to learn from his mistakes. Send the message that failure is a critical part of learning.

Make the Connection Between the Screen and the Real World

- ❑ After viewing a show about animals, take a walk in the neighborhood and talk about the animals you see. Or, take a trip to the zoo and connect what your child has seen on-screen to this real-life setting.
- ❑ Help your child apply the concepts she is learning from games, apps, and TV shows—like letters, numbers, and colors—to her real world. Name the letters on the signs you pass during your commute. Count the apples she is helping you place in the grocery bag. Point out the colors of the clothes you are folding as you sort laundry together.
- ❑ Use the issues or challenges TV characters face to help your child when he faces similar situations. “Mikey learned not to grab toys from friends because they didn’t want to play with him when he grabbed. Now it’s time for you to give James his toy back and choose another one just like Mikey did.” Or, “You are getting so frustrated with this puzzle. It is really hard. What does (insert name of character) do when he is frustrated?”



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