

Common Sense Tips for a Healthy Media Diet

Establish media guidelines for your kids.

- › Set media time limits and stick to them. Experts recommend no more than one to two hours a day of screen time.
- › Check content and ratings at www.commonsensemedia.org in advance to choose media that is age-appropriate.
- › Keep media out of kids' bedrooms. Locate media in a central place where their media use can be supervised.
- › Make a NO media rule during mealtimes, while doing homework, and before bedtime.
- › Consider using parental controls – blocking technology like the V-Chip for TV or filtering software for the Internet.
- › Get kids into the habit of asking permission to use media.
- › Make sure babysitters and other caregivers know your media guidelines.
- › Push the remote button to “off” and get kids to read, exercise, or play every day for the same amount of time they spend using media.

Use media together and talk about what you see, hear, and read.

Whenever you can, watch, play, listen, and surf with your kids. Talk about the content. When you can't be there, ask them about the media they've used.

Practice media literacy – help kids question and analyze media messages by sharing your values. Let them know how you feel about solving problems with violence, stereotyping people, selling products using sex or cartoon characters, or advertising to kids in schools or movie theaters.

Help kids connect what they learn in the media to events and other activities in which they're involved, like playing sports and creating art, in order to broaden their understanding of the world.

Be a role model.

When kids are around, set an example by using media the way you want them to use it.

Use the VCR or TiVo™ to record shows that may be inappropriate for your kids to watch – even the news – and watch them at a later time when kids are not around.

Voice your opinion and keep informed.

Write a letter or send an email to let media companies and government representatives know what you don't like about media. Make sure to also let advertisers who sponsor the media know how you feel too. And don't forget to compliment media companies when you like something and would like to see more of it!

Help kids write letters when they want media producers to know how they feel.

Keep informed about policy and research concerning children and media at www.commonsensemedia.org.