

## What parents **NEED** to **KNOW** about TV and their **CHILDREN**



This handout describes the **TOP 10 PITFALLS OR TRAPS** that parents have to deal with when **viewing** and **discussing TV** with their children.

Pitfall	Explanation
<b>1</b> Feeling guilty about media usage	<b>Don't feel bad or guilty about TV</b> , but use it wisely. Most parents have concerns about their child's viewing, and many feel guilty about it. This shame hampers their ability to be thoughtful about media usage.
<b>2</b> Eating in front of the set	<b>Don't let your children eat while they watch TV</b> , or insist on healthy, low-calorie foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables). Snacking while viewing is common, and increases caloric intake.
<b>3</b> Focusing too much on quantity	<b>Be selective about the programming your children watch.</b> Use DVDs and digital recording technology to help you. While too much TV is a problem, what is viewed and how it is viewed is more important than the amount viewed.
<b>4</b> Giving in to pester power	<b>Be strong!</b> Relenting to children's demands for junk food is one of the ways TV leads to obesity.
<b>5</b> Letting kids watch alone	<b>Co-viewing improves the beneficial effects of positive programs</b> , and diminishes the harmful effects of negative ones. If you can't be in the room watching with your children, at least be familiar with what they are viewing.
<b>6</b> Underestimating commercials	<b>Pay attention to commercials</b> , and talk with your children about what commercials are and how you feel about what they are selling. TV commercials are a powerful socializing force that is poorly regulated and unrated, whether they be for junk food or alcohol.
<b>7</b> Missing teachable moments	<b>Take the opportunities TV provides</b> to reinforce positive messages and discuss negative ones. Even at its worst, TV provides ample chances to broach discussions about sex, violence, alcohol, and drug use.
<b>8</b> Setting a bad example	<b>Practice what you preach!</b> Be selective about what you view, and do not idly channel surf.
<b>9</b> TV in child's bedroom	<b>Keep bedrooms TV-free zones.</b> Children with televisions in their bedrooms watch more than those without one. Moreover, parents cannot monitor content.
<b>10</b> Mindless viewing	<b>Teach your children to be aware of what the medium is all about.</b> Think about TV as you watch. Know that it has a point of view.

Adopted from the *Elephant in the Living Room: Make TV Work for your Kids* (Christakis and Zimmerman (Routledge press)).  
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