



no "kid"ding did you know?

topic: tv-smart

website resources

[Center for Screen-Time Awareness](#)

[Children and TV Violence](#)

[Green Hour](#)

[How TV Affects Your Child](#)

[Kids' Movies and TV](#)

[Television and Children: Guidelines for Parents](#)

[TV-Free or TV-Smart?](#)

[TV-Turnoff Week and other television resources](#)

The following "No 'Kid'ding" article appeared in the April 2009 issue of Alternatives for Youth's (AFY) [Youth Matters newsletter](#).

April 20-26, 2009 is Turnoff Week, a week to turn off the television and encourage youth and families to try other activities. Turnoff Week is a great time to think about youth, the impact of television on their lives and how to help youth be tv-smart. Did you know:

- Two-thirds of infants and toddlers and children under 6 watch a TV an average of 2 hours a day.
- Kids and teens 8 to 18 years spend nearly 4 hours a day in front of a TV screen and almost 2 additional hours on the computer (outside of schoolwork) and playing video games.
- The average American child will witness 200,000 violent acts on television by age 18. Kids who view violent acts are more likely to show aggressive behavior but also fear that the world is scary and that something bad will happen to them.
- Children who consistently spend more than 4 hours per day watching TV are more likely to be overweight.
- Youth in the United States see 40,000 commercials each year.
- TV characters often depict risky behaviors, such as smoking and drinking, and also reinforce gender-role and racial stereotypes.
- Studies have shown that teens who watch lots of sexual content on TV are more likely to initiate intercourse or participate in other sexual activities earlier than peers who don't watch sexually explicit shows.
- Alcohol ads on TV have increased over the last few years and more underage kids are being exposed to them than ever before such that youth exposure to alcohol ads on TV increased by 30% from 2001 to 2006.
- Kids who watch 5 or more hours of TV per day are far more likely to begin smoking cigarettes than those who watch less than the recommended 2 hours a day. Although cigarette ads on television have been banned, kids and teens can still see plenty of people smoking on programs and movies airing on TV.
- As kids get older, too much screen time can interfere with activities such as being physically active, reading, doing homework, playing with friends, and spending time with family.
- Hundreds of studies of the effects of TV violence on children and teenagers have found that children may become "immune" or numb to the horror of violence; gradually accept violence as a way to solve problems; and imitate the violence they observe on television.
- On the positive side, studies have indicated that



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- Television increases the general vocabulary of children, especially when it involves terms referring to outer space.
 - Television provides opportunities for children to learn about all kinds of things, although whether they do so depends largely on the specific programs the child actually watches.
 - Television can increase a child's range of interests since it exposes him or her to a variety of activities and topics he or she might not otherwise encounter.
- Parents and guardians can be TV smart and teach their kids to be TV smart by:
- Making a checklist of the values that they want shows to reinforce (honesty, responsibility, kindness) and checking television shows kids watch against the list.
 - Watching the shows with their kids and knowing what their kids are watching.
 - Not allowing kids to watch TV shows or movies that are known to be violent or racially or sexually stereotyping.
 - Setting viewing limits.
 - Talking with their kids about the show as they watch.
 - Limiting kids' exposure to TV commercials by having kids watch public television stations, recording programs and fast forwarding through commercials, and buying, renting or borrowing from the library children's videos or DVDs.
 - Teaching kids to be savvy consumers by talking about the products advertised on TV.
 - Offering fun alternatives to TV watching, including stocking the room in which you have your TV with plenty of other non-screen entertainment (books, kids' magazines, toys, puzzles, board games, etc.) to encourage kids to do something other than watch the tube.
 - Keeping TVs out of bedrooms.
 - Turning the TV off during meals and homework times.
 - Treating TV as a privilege to be earned - not a right.
 - Setting a good example by limiting their own TV viewing.

Note: The above is provided as information and does not indicate an endorsement by Alternatives for Youth of the listed websites.