

Parenting Tip of the Month

October



Lower Elementary Teachers

How to Limit Your Child's Screen Time

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"Television is the menace that everyone loves to hate but can't seem to live without." - Paddy Chayevsky

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation:

- Kids under age 6 watch an average of about 2 hours of screen media a day, primarily TV and videos or DVDs.
- 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.
- Counting all media outlets, 8-18 year-olds devote an average of 7 hours and 38 minutes to using entertainment media across a typical day

And the effects of television on children are not good. Children who watch too much television:

- Carry a much higher risk of childhood obesity.
- Are more likely to display aggressive behavior. Children naturally copy what they see. (For a simple, chilling experiment, allow your son to watch professional wrestling and see how long it takes before he tackles his sister).
- Are more likely to engage in "risky behaviors" when they get older.
- Have less energy.
- Have a harder time in school.
- Are more-exposed to commercials, advertisements, and propaganda.

Most people would agree that our culture watches too much. Yet, few people are able to curb their habit and reclaim their life. And even fewer know how to help their children navigate the media-drenched world we live in.

To help inspire parents, here are **12 tips to help limit your child's screen time**. Each of these are tried-and-true methods used in our home and others.

Set the Example. Sorry to start with the toughest one, but there is nowhere else to start. Children will always gravitate toward the modeled behaviors of their parents. If they see you reading a book, they are more likely to read. And if they see you watching television, so will they.

Be the Parent. It is your job to encourage healthy behaviors and limit unhealthy ones - sometimes this means making unpopular decisions. Make these tough decisions for your children. And always go the next step of explaining why you have made the decision - this will help them follow through and someday choose it for themselves.

Set Limited Viewing or Electronics Times. If you are not going to turn off the television completely, choose the appropriate television viewing windows for your kids. It is much easier to limit their viewing habit if they understand that they can only watch one show in the morning and one show after school (as just an example).

Encourage Other Activities. And provide the necessary resources (books to read, board games, art supplies, and/or sporting equipment).

Play with Your Kids. Get down on the floor with your kids and pick up a doll, truck, or ball. It takes intentionality and selfless love when they are 6. But when they turn 13, you'll be glad you did.

Be Involved in Their Lives. For many parents, it is just easier to turn on the television than to actually be involved in the lives of their children. But those intimate life details are required for successful parenting. So observe, listen, ask, and parent.

Cut your Cable / Remove Your Television Completely. If you want a sure-fire way to limit your child's television viewing habits, cut your cable/satellite television feed (or remove your television completely). It will change your family's life overnight (it changed ours). Oh, by the way, it will positively impact your checkbook too.

Observe Your Child's Behavioral Changes. Television has an immediate impact on your child's behavior. After too much television/video games, my children get irritable, aggressive, selfish, and impatient. I can tell almost the moment I walk in the door. Be on the lookout for these behavioral changes. When you start to notice them yourself, you'll be less inclined to put your kids in front of the screen.

Don't Worry if They Miss Out on Parts of the Conversation. Your child's friend will talk about television. They will compare notes about cartoons, Nickelodeon, or prime-time programming. You will think that you are depriving your child of friendships because they cannot join in on those parts of the conversation (I'm speaking from experience). But don't worry. You

will have successfully prepared to your child to enter into far deeper, richer conversations than the most recent Hannah Montana episode.

Value Family Meals and Car Rides. About two-thirds (64%) of young people say the TV is usually on during meals. That's too bad because your family's richest conversations will always take place during meals and in the car. Value those times with you kids. Don't let the TV steal them from you.

No TV's or Electronics in Bedrooms. Not your kids' rooms. And not yours either.

Find your mantra. A *mantra* is a sound, word, or group of words that are considered capable of creating transformation. While the words may not be magic in themselves, the consistent use of them can be. Every parent should have them and use them effectively. My "too-much television" mantra goes like this, "There's been too much screen time in this family." And every time my kids hear me say it, they know what it means... they know we are about to spend some quality time together.

Limiting your child's screen time may seem like an impossible chore or it may seem like a battle that is too difficult to fight. But it is worth fighting.

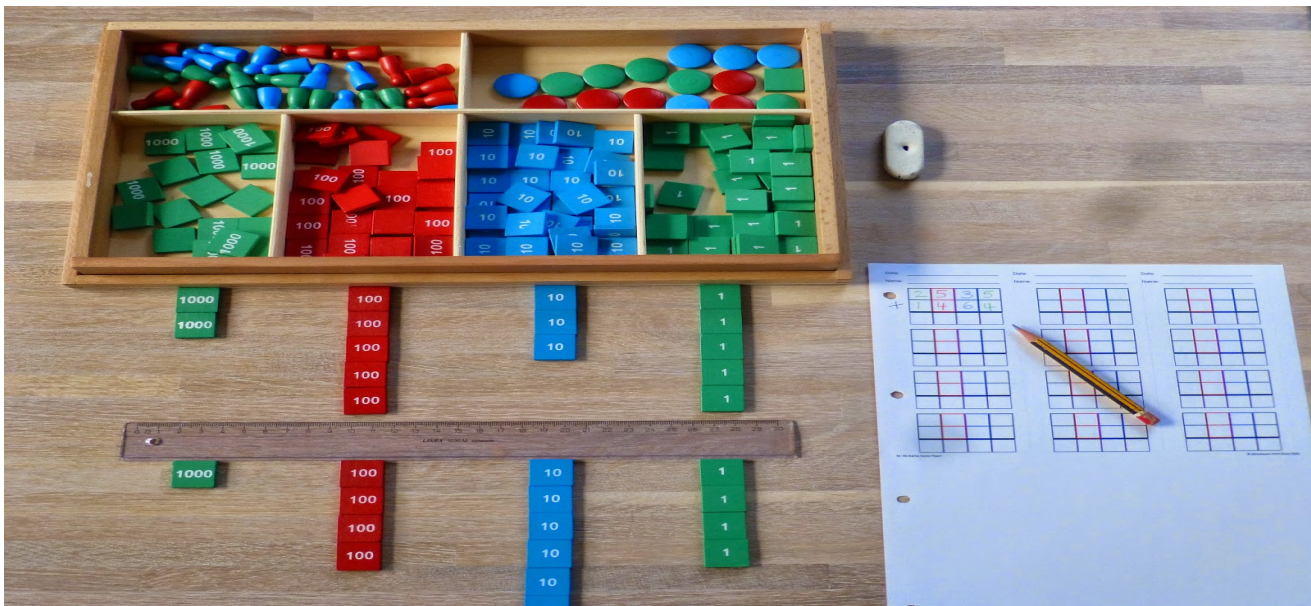
Implementing just a few steps right away will help you implement the others. Television viewing is a momentum-gathering behavior. The more you do it, the more compelled you are to continue (advertisements have that effect on viewers). But the opposite is also true. The more you turn it off, the easier it becomes to keep off. You've just got to start somewhere.

Material of the Month

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Montessori Material Explained: The Stamp Game

The stamp game is a tool for learning and reinforcing knowledge of the four math operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Typically, it is used by children (5 years +) for both static and dynamic (carrying or exchanging) equations.

The stamp game directly corresponds to the golden bead material, which gave the child exposure to the decimal system. It is just more abstract, yet concretely demonstrates the maths process to young children. It prepares the child for pencil and paper work, and memorization of facts. Once introduced, the Stamp Game provides opportunities for individual practice.

Material

The stamp game has stamp sized flat, wooden squares that come in three colors: green ('1'), blue ('10') and red ('100'). Each stamp of 1000 is green marked with '1000'. The child uses a ruler, pencil and a gridded piece of paper to right the problem.

How it works

This example is for simple static (no carrying or no exchanging) addition.

Problem: $3,245 + 2,312$

- The child writes the problem in his book.
- The child forms and lays out in columns the quantity for the first addend (3,245) and places a ruler under it.
- Beneath the ruler, the child forms the second addend (2,312) making sure that the quantity is arranged in columns.
- The child removes the ruler leaving the two addends/quantities still separate.
- Starting from the units, the child now moves the second quantity up to join the first.

- The child counts the number of stamps in each column and notes the answer (5,557) in his book.
- This material works in a similar fashion for multiplication, division and is also used for dynamic work - children learn the concept of carrying, as they literally carry stamps to exchange them.

To see how other examples work:

<http://www.infomontessori.com/mathematics/decimal-system-stamp-game.htm>

What's the benefit for my child?

The lesson is given individually or a group of kids from the teacher. It is given when the teacher recognizes that the child is ready - academically and emotionally. Example: In a frame of mind to receive the knowledge and therefore enjoy real learning. This attention to your child is only possible through this individualized approach of Montessori.

The stamp game employs the hand and engages the mind to absorb the math concepts much more fully than working only with pencil, paper and worksheet, as is the norm. The child can use this material to do a great range of math work, making it something they can return to again and again. Working in pairs with the material to solve problems also provides peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

For some children math work comes easily and for other kids it might take longer, but with the Montessori materials the concepts are so clearly demonstrated that children will gain a much better understanding and retention of those concepts. Some can progress quickly and with more complexity. Others can return as often as needed to the materials to reapply and reinforce their knowledge.

Description of the material:

It is called the stamp game as the original material was made up of big sheets of paper covered in perforations like that of stamps. The children would actually tear off from the sheets the number of stamps needed and then glue them down into their notebook or a piece of paper. This was rather expensive, so it was substituted by wood and plastic material later on.

The material is now made of little wooden squares in hierarchic colors (green for units or ones, blue for tens, red of hundreds and green for unit of thousands) with the numbers 1 (units or ones), 10 (tens), 100 (hundreds) and 1000 (thousands) written on them (1, 10, 100, 1000).

The little stamps are of the same size and shape but you can tell them apart by the color and number written on them.

This is a very interesting material, as the stamps represent both quantity and symbol. It demonstrates a passage to abstraction through the use of place values. We're moving in the direction of working with place values for distinguishing one digit from another, that is, the position occupied by a digit determines its value.

We use this material to work with all four mathematical operations - addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. What makes working with this material different from working with the decimal system materials is that the children work individually with the stamp game. Children only work with the stamp game after they've worked with the golden bead material. Therefore, any child working with the stamp game already knows concepts related to the above mathematical operations.

Reference:

Montessori East