

---

# Common Sense on Media for Babies and Toddlers

---

## Want to stimulate your baby's brain? Turn off the TV.

The programming is adorable. The packaging conjures up famous thinkers and composers. All of this baby media is part of a multimillion dollar business (a good thing to think about when tempted to buy or use media at this age). After all, you are your baby's best teacher. So when it comes to trying new ways to help your child think, you may want to start by putting that baby program on pause.

---

### Some facts

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV for kids under 2.

43% of children under the age of 2 watch TV every day and nearly one in five watch videos or DVDs every day (*Kaiser, 2003*).

In 2009 the Walt Disney Company began offering refunds for Baby Einstein products, based on evidence that the products were not educational.

Studies show that television exposure at ages 1 through 3 is associated with attention problems at age 7 (*Christakis, 2004*).

Other studies show that some educational programming for kids over 2 — like family favorite Sesame Street — can help get kids ready for school (*Society for Research in Child Development, 2001*).

---

## What is baby media?

From Baby Einstein to Brainy Baby, all kinds of DVDs and computer games are out there for our youngest kids. Since Baby Einstein launched in 1997, baby media has become big business. Sales of videos for infants and toddlers reached \$100 million back in 2004. There's even a television channel — Baby First TV — aimed at this youngest of audiences.

## Why it matters

For starters, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV at all for kids under the age of 2. And while your kid won't be damaged with a little TV or video, remember that every minute spent sitting in front of a TV is a minute when your babies are not exploring the world with all their senses. Research shows that interacting with you is what builds babies' brains. Some new interactive computer programs can be more stimulating than TV shows, but none of these products designed for kids under 2 have been proven to make children smarter or more school-ready. A study at the University of Washington released in August 2007 suggests "developmental" DVDs and videos can actually delay toddler language development.

## Parent tips for young children

- » **If you're going to let babies interact with a screen, know what they are watching and playing.** Be smart about the programs you pick. Choose games or programs that are age-appropriate with non-jarring sounds and bright, stimulating colors.
- » **Don't turn TV into preschool.** Baby TV has not proven to be of any benefit for school readiness. The best preparation for your children involves spending time with them, reading, talking, and exposing them to the world.
- » **As kids get older, keep media out of their bedrooms.** When TV or computers are in their rooms, kids spend more time using media, and parents are less involved with their choices..
- » **Teach your children to ask you if it's okay to turn on media.** This simple control mechanism helps keep gaming, TV watching, and online activity from becoming habits.
- » **Watch the clock.** Media use increases as children get older. Less screen time improves your children's ability to entertain themselves in other ways. Set time rules and stick to them.