



a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 2

TV + Small Fries = Adult Couch Potatoes

Although babies can seem to be drawn to and enjoy screen time, it must be understood that young children are drawn to television more like a moth to a light bulb rather than to an activity or a relationship that nourishes them on a positive level. It isn't screen time itself that hurts a baby's brain. It is actually the loss of face to face interactions with familiar faces and hands on activities that has young viewers paying a dear price in their growth and development.

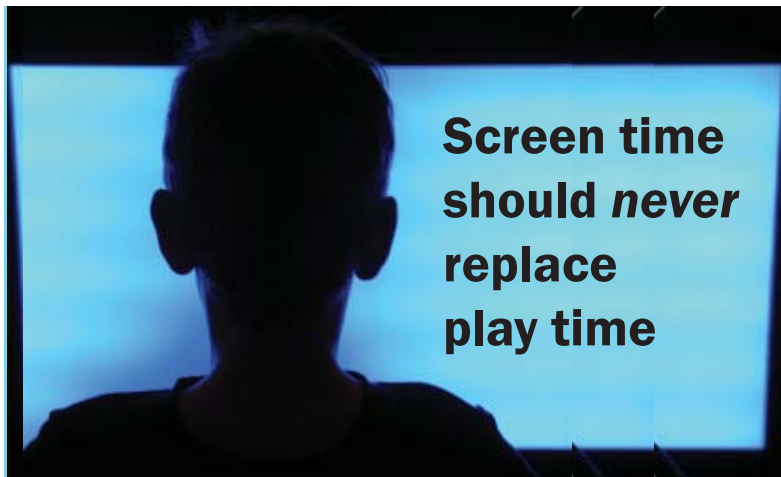
Research has found that

- Babies younger than 6 months are attracted to the loud voices and sudden noises.
- Babies 6-10 months old are attracted to specific sounds (drumming, shrill character voices and laughter)
- Babies 10-18 months focus on music, simple sentences/ words they recognize and television characters)

Although babies are drawn to these things, they are meant to be experienced during real, hands on scenarios where babies can fully participate, socially, emotionally and sensorily. When these rich interactions are poorly substituted by an inanimate flat screen, opportunities for babies to make meaningful brain connections are lost. Babies learn and grow when they are provided with hands on activities and supported by a hands on guide.

Responsive caregivers support curious and confident learners when they

- Model no TV viewing for children under 2 years of age (for older children and parents)
- Limit viewing to 1-2 hours of any screened activity for over 2 years of age (learning games or story based)
- Choose television shows where characters speak to children
- Choose television shows where characters ask children to participate (repeat a word or hop like a bunny)
- Talk about programs that children are watching ("What was this show about?")
- Answer children's questions ("That car is not real, it can talk because it's a picture on TV")
- Point out things that are on TV ("Look at that beautiful whale swimming in the ocean")
- Model interactive participation (Dance or clap with music)
- Connect real life with TV ("There's a school bus just like the one Reah gets on in the morning!")
- When they reenact what happened in the show after the TV goes off (Use stuffed animals to act out a story seen on TV)
- Avoid using TV time as an activity or to put children to sleep (Children need to develop their own self regulation patterns. Children feel loved, safe and secure at nap-times if their bodies and brains have been active enough throughout the day!)



**Screen time
should *never*
replace
play time**

Television plays a limited role in learning. Children can learn some concepts from watching educational programming, but research has proven that they learn best from interactive, hands on experiences that welcome their participation through touching, feeling, shaking, stacking, problem solving and especially conversations about what they are doing.... their frustrations, their questions and their joy at simply sharing a moment of time with the significant people in their lives. Responsive caregivers feel honored to have been playing alongside young children during these moments of discovery, rather than giving the privilege to a flat screen.

Television and the Under Three Crowd: Making Good Decisions about "Screen Time" for Young Children, Zero To Three Copyright 2009.
What Research Tells Us About the Impact of TV/Video Viewing on Children Under Three, Zero To Three
Should Babies Watch TV, Parenting.com, 2007