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The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly Truth About TV And Your Preschooler

By Deanna Mascle

I am the mother of a preschooler and I have to admit that my child watches several hours of

television each week. I am sure he watches more hours than any educator would recommend, but I've decided to dismiss the recommendation of the so-called experts. For the record, my child is a precocious, intelligent child who started preschool at the head of his class and will start kindergarten next fall at the head of his class. So who is right? I think we both are because there are good, bad, and ugly truths about television and the preschool set.

There are many good truths about preschool television. Today there is more quality programming designed with educational benefits in mind than ever before. While I did have Sesame Street in my youth, today my child has several stations designed specifically to offer quality programming (often created by or with educators). My child learned Spanish and sign language in preschool but his experience was reinforced and expanded by Sesame Street, Maya and Miguel, Dora The Explorer, and other shows. Preschool and library programs introduced my child to science and math but his knowledge was also increased by Stanley, Discovery Kids, and Bear In The Big Blue House. Literacy, history, culture, and interpersonal relationships were all expanded by shows such as Blues Clues, Power Rangers, and Thomas The Tank Engine. Through television programs my child can experience dinosaurs, volcanoes, sharks, and rain forests and as a result he is much more informed and knowledgeable than I was about the world at his age.

There are some bad truths about preschoolers' relationship to television as well. My son has learned bad habits, attitudes and language from some shows and networks. I have seen my child and others take on a zombie-like aspect in front of the television. For some children, thankfully not mine, television takes the place of active play so the child lacks physical and mental stimulation. Not all television is appropriate for preschoolers and can expose children to violence, lifestyles, and sexual situations that young children cannot, and should not, comprehend.

The ugly truth about television and preschoolers is that TV is a tool — and like any other tool it can be either used or abused. Too many families rely on television as a cheap babysitter. I have done so myself. Too many families place no restrictions or control over their preschoolers' television habits. Children can watch whatever they want, whenever they want. It is easy to blame networks or the

entertainment industry for problems with our children. It is easy to diagnose that cutting back television viewing is the cure.

The simple truth is that balance and control are the real keys — not restricting your child's access to television. Balance TV viewing with quality family time and play time. Control what stations and shows your child watches. Television can be a positive force in your preschooler's life if you exercise balance and control, but if you don't take care then it may well become a negative force. The simple truth is the direction of the pendulum swing is up to you as a parent.

Deanna Mascle shares more articles about preschoolers in her blog at

<http://PreschoolersLearnMore.info>

10 Things My Preschooler Taught Me

By Deborah Shelton

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10 Things My Preschooler Taught Me
by Deborah Shelton

1. That no matter how many snails are lined up on your arm, there's always room for one more.
2. That chocolate ice cream stains on a white rug can be considered works of art if you squint hard enough.
3. That tissues are a waste of time, especially if you have a perfectly good shirt sleeve.
4. That ketchup smeared into television speaker holes, once dried, actually enhances the sound quality of cartoons.
5. That cold pizza is the fifth major food group.
6. That "butt" and "poop" are two of the funniest and most underrated words in the English language.

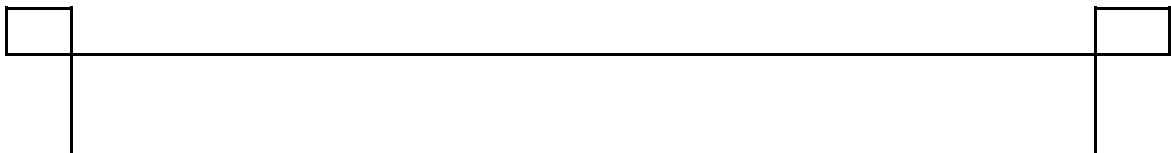
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7. That when you're running late in the morning, every single sock in the house will have mysteriously disappeared.
8. That the only way to truly appreciate a Scooby-Doo movie is to watch it twice a day, every day, until the tape turns to black and white.
9. That your friends are your friends until they wipe a booger on your neck.
10. That when you're eating watermelon, clothing is optional.

Deborah Shelton is the author of *The Five Minute Parent: Fun & Fast Activities for You and Your Little Ones*. Visit *The Five Minute Parent* for fun rainy-day activities, family links, and a free email newsletter filled with craft ideas, guest articles, contests and so much more! <http://www.fiveminuteparent.com>



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