

Television: Making a Choice

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand both positive and negative effects of watching television.
- To understand the impact of television and advertisements on choices we make.

GROUP SIZE:

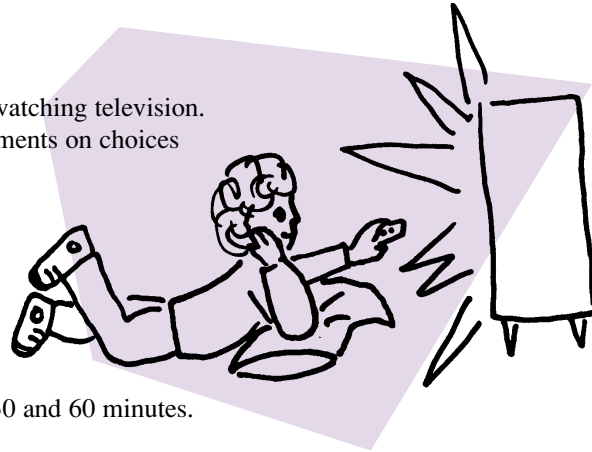
6 to 8 children per adult volunteer.

TIME FRAME:

This lesson is designed for a group meeting between 30 and 60 minutes.

BACKGROUND:

Ninety-seven to ninety-nine percent of American homes have at least one television set. It has been estimated that by the time children complete grade school, they have spent as many hours in front of a television set as it takes to get a college degree! Help children discover the positive and negative effects television can have on our lives. Encourage them to make wise choices and develop good habits regarding television.



LIFE SKILL AREAS

Group games and role playing will offer practice in social skills. Fine motor development will occur through the use of markers and crayons. Large motor skills will be fostered through group games.

HELPS TO THE VOLUNTEERS

Try these suggestions. Choose one or two of the following activities from each section. Try to create appropriate atmosphere by decorating the room with posters and props, using costumes related to the activity, pre-meeting preparation by the 4-H members, thinking

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

I. GETTING STARTED

 **ACTIVITY:** "TV - What's So Bad About It?" (7 - 9 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

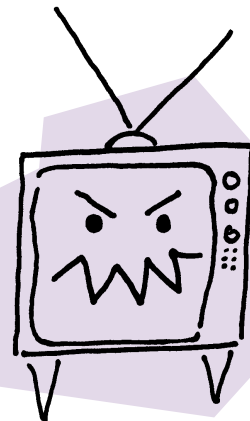
Materials: TV Guide, large piece of paper, marker.

Show the children the TV Guide. Ask if anyone knows what it is. Ask for a show of hands for how many people like to watch TV. Have the children brainstorm ideas about the positive effects of TV (it's entertaining, keeps them busy, can learn things, etc.). Record their ideas on the paper in a column titled "Good." Ask them to think about some things that are not so good about TV. If the group has difficulty with this, ask them to think of things grown-ups worry about concerning TV. Help make suggestions if needed. Make sure the following are included:

- takes time away from playing
- commercials make you want to buy things you don't need
- learn bad habits or language
- encourages violence

Record these ideas in a column titled "Bad." Talk about the children's ideas. Emphasize that TV has many good qualities and that there are also things that aren't so good that people should be aware of.

Application: Ask the children to think about the things listed on the "Good" and "Bad" lists as they watch television in the next week. Encourage them to make a new list or talk with their parents about how television has affected them personally.



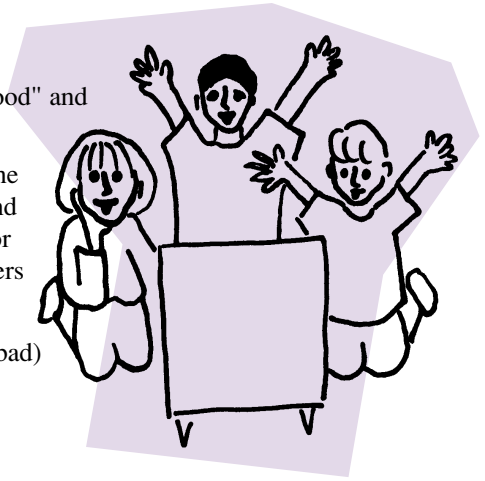
☀ **ACTIVITY:** "What's Your Favorite" (5 - 7 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: pictures of television characters and personalities, list of "Good" and "Bad" things about TV.

Show the pictures to the children. Ask them to name the character and the program the character is on. Ask them to name their favorite program and character. Ask why they chose who they did and what makes the show or character appealing. Look at the "Good" and "Bad" list. Do the characters or programs they chose fit any of the things listed?

Application: Encourage the children to look for the qualities (good and bad) that were listed the next time they watch TV.



☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Cartoon Creations" (7 - 9 minutes)

Grade Level: 1 - 3

Materials: 10 - 12 small pieces of paper stapled together to make a "flip book," pencils.

Teach the children something fun about television! Show each child how to do simple animation by drawing a simple figure many times changing its position slightly on each page. Flip through the book to illustrate how cartoons work.

Application: Ask the children to think about their flip books the next time they watch cartoons.

II. DIGGING DEEPER

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Investigating Commercials" (5 - 7 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: several products currently advertised on television.

Show the children the products. Ask if anyone knows the jingle or slogan for any of the items. Explain that manufacturers and advertisers count on people to remember their commercials so that people will buy their product. Ask the children if they can remember any other commercials. Do they have any favorites? What do they advertise? Ask the children if they can name any commercials that use these marketing techniques:

- uses words like "bigger," "better," "improved"
- makes negative statements about a competing product
- uses catchy jingles or slogans
- uses animals, babies, or children
- suggests you will be more popular if you use the product
- uses a famous person to endorse the product

Ask the children if they think these techniques work. Emphasize that commercials often make claims that aren't necessarily true. The purpose of a commercial is to sell the product and make money for the manufacturer.

Application: Ask the children to be aware of these selling techniques the next time they watch TV.

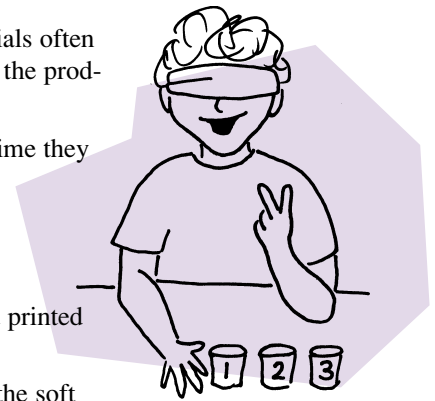
☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Commercial Challenge" (5 - 7 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: a popular brand of cola, a generic cola, paper cups, a blindfold, and printed ads for leading colas.

Manufacturers often make exaggerated claims about their products. Challenge the soft drink advertisers with this taste test. Let the children decide which cola tastes better by tasting each while blindfolded. Keep a tally of how many children chose the leading brand and how many chose the generic brand. Which cola was chosen more often? Talk about why they think one tasted better than the other.

Application: Encourage the children to look for commercials for other products that they can challenge at home.



☀ **ACTIVITY:** "A Commercial Success" (7 - 9 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: none.

Encourage the children to make their own commercials using a variety of marketing techniques (exaggerated claims, words like "bigger" or "better," make negative statements about a competing product, or a catchy jingle or slogan). Let them choose a well-known product or make up their own. Encourage them to think of a slogan or jingle to help sell their product.

Application: Ask the children to count how many commercials are aired during just one half hour of programming. Point out that commercials are usually very short and can get their message across very quickly.



III. LOOKING WITHIN

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Make Your Own Television" (10 - 15 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: shoe boxes, paper 36" by the width of each shoe box, two pencils for each TV, tape and crayons or markers.

Invite the children to make their own television and produce their own show! Help children divide their paper into three "frames," the size of the inside of the shoe box. Outline the frames in black. Have the children draw a three part story, one part for each of the frames. Encourage them to keep it simple! Push the pencils through each end of the box; tape the end of the story to the pencil on the right and roll it up. Tape the other end to the pencil on the left side. Help the child roll their story. Let them narrate as their story unfolds. Have fun sharing with the group.

Note to the Volunteer: Have the children make extra examples to use in the Art Exhibit and Cloverbud Display lessons in the subject area of Community Expressive Arts.

Application: Ask the children to think about additional programs or commercials they could make for their televisions.

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Planning TV Time" (6 - 8 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: TV Guide or television listing from local newspaper.

Ask the children to think about the amount of time they spend watching television. Show them the television listings. Ask if they could only watch one show a day, what show would they choose? Have them plan an imaginary "television menu" for one week, choosing no more than one hour's worth of programming a day. Talk about making choices. Sometimes it's hard to decide and sometimes we wish we'd made a different choice.

Application: Ask children to plan ahead with their parents what they would like to watch on TV for the week.

IV. BRINGING CLOSURE

☀ **ACTIVITY:** "Let's Have a Ball" (4 - 6 minutes)

Grade Level: K - 3

Materials: a beach ball or other lightweight ball.

Have the children sit in a circle. Explain that one of the main concerns adults have about children watching television is that they are inactive while watching and that it takes away time they could be spending on something else. Tell them to think about things they might choose to do instead of watching television. Begin the game by tossing the ball to a child in the circle saying "Have a ball! Let's rollerskate!" The child that catches the ball tosses it to another child and repeats the phrase and adds their own idea (e.g.

TV Menu		
DAY	NAME OF SHOWS (2 ONE HALF HOUR SHOWS OR ONE HOUR LONG SHOW)	
MONDAY		
TUESDAY		
WEDNESDAY		
THURSDAY		
FRIDAY		
SATURDAY		
SUNDAY		

"Have a ball! Let's rollerskate and play checkers!") Continue until each child has had a chance to repeat all of the choices and add their own. Encourage the children to think of a variety of activities. End the game by emphasizing that there are lots of things to do besides watching television.

V. GOING BEYOND

1. Use a stop watch to time how many minutes commercials take up during a thirty-minute program. Go one step further and count the number of times violence or name calling occurs during an action cartoon.
2. Encourage the children and families to take the "Television Quiz" and follow the suggestions listed.

TELEVISION QUIZ FOR FAMILIES

Parents: Take this quiz with your child. Help them circle the response that best answers each item.

- | | | | |
|-----|----|-----|--|
| Yes | No | 1. | Would you rather watch television during free time more than any other activity? |
| Yes | No | 2. | Do you watch TV in the morning before you go to school? |
| Yes | No | 3. | Do you eat meals while watching TV? |
| Yes | No | 4. | Do you have three or more TV sets? |
| Yes | No | 5. | Do you have a TV set in your bedroom? |
| Yes | No | 6. | Do you have cable TV? |
| Yes | No | 7. | Do you get a subscription to a TV listings magazine? |
| Yes | No | 8. | Do you feel bored or irritable if you can't watch TV? |
| Yes | No | 9. | Do you always snack while you watch TV? |
| Yes | No | 10. | Do you know what's on TV without looking in the paper? |
| Yes | No | 11. | Do you change plans or schedule your time around TV shows? |
| Yes | No | 12. | Do you do other things, like homework, while you watch TV? |
| Yes | No | 13. | Do you try to act, talk, or dress like TV characters? |
| Yes | No | 14. | Do you spend a lot of time talking with your friends about TV? |
| Yes | No | 15. | Do you "channel surf" or watch more than one show at a time? |
| Yes | No | 16. | Do you tape one program to watch later while you watch another show? |
| Yes | No | 17. | Do you think about TV characters a lot when you're not watching TV? |
| Yes | No | 18. | Do you regularly watch soap operas, talk shows, or violent action cartoons? |
| Yes | No | 19. | Do you watch TV when you are bored? |
| Yes | No | 20. | Do you argue with family members about TV? |

Results: If your child answered most of the questions with a "yes," they are not unlike most children today.

Here are some suggestions to help make television viewing a positive and worthwhile experience.

- Choose an amount of time you feel is appropriate for your child to watch TV; help them choose what and when they can watch.
- Watch TV with your children; discuss situations as they happen; if the values presented conflict with your own, say so and tell your child why.
- Set a good example; if you turn the TV on for "company" or automatically turn it on to "see what's on," your children will probably do the same thing.
- Take advantage of the many excellent children's specials on TV and children's classics available on video.

Reading Adventures

This listing of reading materials can be used by you as background, or for sharing before to set the stage for the lesson or for sharing afterwards to reinforce the lesson.

TV Monster, by Rosalind Barden

The Beranstain Bears and Too Much TV, by Stan Beranstain

Fix-It, by David McPhail

