

Parenting News & Views



MANAGING MEDIA USE

Children use media daily, but how much is too much, and how can you tell what is appropriate and educational for your child?

Children access media by looking at screens such as on a television, computer, tablet, cell phone, e-reader, or MP3 player. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of two avoid using screens and children over the age of two use screens for no more than two hours a day.

Help your child learn to use media and screen time responsibly by setting time limits, keeping screens out of bedrooms, turning them off during dinner, and monitoring screen time for quality content. Lead by example and show your child that it can be fun to do other things like playing a board game or spending time outside.

Common Sense Media is dedicated to helping parents and educators choose quality media. On their website, www.commonsensemedia.org, you can find age recommendations and content ratings for movies, games, television, books, apps, websites, and music. You can also find information about educational uses of media by visiting the website for the Fred Rogers Center at www.fredrogerscenter.org.



THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

Have you ever seen a child stand in one spot, hold her arms out, and spin? Ever watched two children split the last candy bar, or decide who goes first in a game? Or maybe you have watched a child look at a flower, a seashell, or a leaf? If you have, then you have had the pleasure of seeing math the way children do; not as a number on your bank statement, but as a way of living and exploring the world.

Three to five year old children can learn about numbers, basic addition and subtraction, measurement, and shapes through play and household chores. You can support this learning by playing and having conversations with your child. Playing is an effective learning tool because it gives children the time and freedom to choose activities and practice skills without feeling pressured to succeed. Play also gives children the opportunity to exchange ideas and work together to solve problems.

The child who likes to spin is learning about circles. The two children splitting a candy bar are estimating its measurements while they divide it into two equal parts. When children investigate natural objects they can see spirals, lines, shapes, and colors in their many patterns.

Children often use informal counting rhymes to decide who goes first in a game such as: “*Eeny meeny miny moe, catch a tiger by the toe, if he hollers let him go, eeny meeny miny moe.*” Although they are not saying numbers out loud, they are pointing to each child as they say the rhyme, and once they have done it often enough they learn they can control who is “it” by who they point to first. This is sophisticated mathematical reasoning.

Children use math to explore the world every day. When they get dressed they count clothing. If they have cereal for breakfast they measure it into a bowl, and then pour in the right amount of milk. Children may not even be aware that they are counting, and this is where you can help. When you see your child doing an activity that uses counting or numbers you can use conversation to help her think about the concepts she is practicing. *continued on back*

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EASY PUMPKIN MUFFINS

Below is a pumpkin recipe you and your child can bake for a breakfast treat or morning snack. Children can help with measuring and mixing ingredients, greasing the muffin pan, pouring batter, and cleaning up. This is a fun way to practice practical math skills like counting and measuring, while enjoying a tasty treat.

You will need:

- 1 (18.25 oz.) box of yellow cake mix
- 1 (15 oz.) canned pumpkin
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
- Optional: Substitute 1/2 tsp. pumpkin spice for the nutmeg and cloves.

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 12 cup muffin pan or line with paper liners.
2. In a large bowl mix together the cake mix, canned pumpkin, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves until smooth.
3. Spoon equal amounts of batter into the prepared muffin cups.
4. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center of one comes out clean.
5. Allow muffins to cool before serving.
6. Serve with a glass of milk and some fresh fruit.

Source: martysmusings.net/2013/09/easy-pumpkin-muffins.html



FUN WITH KIDS

READ BOOKS EVERY DAY

Look for opportunities to read to or with your child every day. Reading together promotes social and emotional interaction among family members, positively impacts cognitive development, and sets your child up for success in school and beyond.

Infants

Infants love the sound of their parents' voices. Listening to you read out loud teaches your baby about language. Make reading times relaxed and enjoyable by holding your infant on your lap as you talk about the pictures and turn pages. Books with large, simple pictures, or photos of people's faces, are appealing to babies. Point to pictures as you name them and your infant will learn to connect the object with its name. By doing this, you are introducing your baby to both spoken and written language.

Toddlers

Make reading a part of the daily routine for toddlers. Set aside time to sit and share a book, such as before nap times or at night before bed. Toddlers enjoy books with simple pictures and sentences. Books with words that repeat, rhyme, or that can be sung are usually favorites. Some authors that toddlers may enjoy reading are Eric Hill, Donald Crews, Denise Fleming, and Eric Carle. Toddlers also enjoy singing or chanting simple nursery rhymes such as *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*; *Patty Cake*; or *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*.

Preschool Children

Try selecting rhyming books by Dr. Seuss, humorous books by Robert Munsch, critical thinking stories by Laura Joffe Numeroff or Tana Hoban, books about emotions by Audrey Penn, poetry by Shel Silverstein and other authors such as Kevin Henkes, Ed Emberley, and more! Visit the library to borrow books and listen to story hour. Lead by example and let your child see you reading, because then she will be more likely to enjoy books as well. Try to schedule at least fifteen minutes to read with your child every day.

School-Age Children

Children in school usually receive reading lists from their teachers, but the librarian can also help your child choose appropriate books. Continue making books part of your daily routine. Although by now your child may be able to read some books alone, it is still important to read stories together.

Remember these words of wisdom from the children's book *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!* by Dr. Seuss, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

YOUR CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is the social, emotional, and behavioral well-being of your child. Helping your child develop qualities such as confidence, impulse control, self-reliance, and resilience will strengthen his mental well-being.

As your child develops relationships with you and his friends, he will learn how to communicate positively, resolve conflicts, cope with stress, and manage his own behavior. Learning and practicing these skills will assist your child in developing strong mental health.

You can assist your child's development by establishing routine, spending quality time together, and respecting her feelings.

Establish Routine

One key to children building these skills is feeling safe and nurtured. Organize your child's day into a predictable, consistent routine. This way he will know what to expect and is less likely to feel stressed. If the routine needs to change for a special event, then warn your child in advance so it is not a surprise. For example, "I have a doctor appointment tomorrow in the afternoon, so grandma will pick you up from school and then I will come get you at her house." This small step gives him the opportunity to practice clear communication and learn to express his feelings or opinions.

Quality Family Time

Mental health is also developed in a positive and loving family environment. Include your child in your daily chores and make the work more enjoyable by playing music you can sing along to while you work. Give your child specific praise for work well done, and support him in learning to be more independent (putting on his own clothes, showering, brushing teeth, etc.). Find a few moments every day to simply talk, laugh, and enjoy being together as a family. Developing family relationships will help your child learn to consider other people's feelings and experience what it feels like to be part of a community.

Respect Feelings

If your child feels stressed, frustrated, angry, or physically uncomfortable, he may use inappropriate behavior. This is a normal part of development. Respect his feelings by acknowledging them, guide him in how to cope with his emotions in a positive way, and encourage him to continue trying. For example, "I can see you feel frustrated with that puzzle. Maybe you could take a break and relax with a book for a few minutes, and then when you feel calm I can help you try again."

If at any time you see that your child has long or frequent tantrums, experiences sleep or eating difficulties, is overly aggressive, is frequently fearful or sad, or takes extreme risks, then speak to your pediatrician or a medical professional immediately and ask for assistance. For more information on child related topics view our free Family Education Materials on our website at www.chs-ca.org.

AGENCY INFORMATION

For more than a century, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

To fulfill our mission, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, educational, and resource services, which include Community Education, Child Care and Development, and Family Resource Services. Along with helping children and their families, CHS is an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level.

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Try asking, "How many socks did you put on? What do they look like?"

You can also help your child become more familiar with numbers by having her help you mark birthdays on the family calendar, use a calculator to type in prices at the grocery store, count toys as she puts them away, count red cars when you are driving, play board games and let her count the squares or add up the numbers she rolled with the dice, and ask questions when you are cooking.

If you are making a snack, you might ask your child, "I was thinking we could have apples with peanut butter for snack. I wonder how many apples I will need." She can count how many people are having snack, and then see how many apples you have and decide if you need less or more.

Cooking activities let your child explore measurement and develop estimation skills. She can help you gather ingredients and use measuring cups, spoons, and scales. You can also let her practice planting seeds and measuring how they grow, looking for the smallest, largest, shortest, and longest objects in a room, or watching a second hand on a watch while waiting in a line.

Support your child as she learns about shapes by allowing her to build with different-sized empty boxes and paper towel tubes, going on a shape hunt to search for all the circles, squares, or triangles in a room, and learning to set the table for dinner. You can also use your finger to draw shapes on your child's back and ask her to guess what they are.

Each time you draw your child's attention to the math around her you are helping her grow and develop.

Source: "Encouraging Rich Mathematical Experiences at Home" by Ginny Haugen and Kristen Haugen (*Child Care Exchange*, May 2003).



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