

# Common Sense Tips for a Healthy Media Diet

## Establish media guidelines for your kids.

- » Set media time limits and stick to them. Experts recommend no more than one to two hours a day of screen time.
- » Check content and ratings at [www.commonsense.org](http://www.commonsense.org) in advance to choose media that is age-appropriate.
- » Keep media out of kids' bedrooms. Locate media in a central place where their media use can be supervised.
- » Make a NO media rule during mealtimes, while doing homework, and before bedtime.
- » Consider using parental controls — blocking technology like the V-Chip for TV or filtering software for the Internet.
- » Get kids into the habit of asking permission to use media.
- » Make sure babysitters and other caregivers know your media guidelines.
- » Push the remote button to “off” and get kids to read, exercise, or play every day for the same amount of time they spend using media.

## Some facts

Kids aged 8 to 18 spend more than 7.5 hours a day with media (*Kaiser, 2010*).

Media use starts early. 43% of children under 2 years old watch TV every day (*Kaiser, 2007*).

Kids who watch more TV than their peers during middle and high school years have less healthy diets five years later (*University of Minnesota, 2009*).

3 out of 4 parents think it's just as important to know how to use digital media as it is to learn traditional skills like reading and writing (*Harris Interactive Poll, 2007*).

## Use media together and talk about what you see, hear, and read

Whenever you can, watch, play, listen, and surf with your children. Talk about the content. When you can't be there, ask them about the media they've used. Help kids question and analyze media messages. Share your own values. Let them know how you feel about solving problems with violence, stereotyping people, selling products using sex or cartoon characters, or advertising to kids in schools or movie theaters. Help kids connect what they learn in the media to events and other activities in which they're involved, such as playing sports and creating art, in order to broaden their understanding of the world.

## Be a role model

When kids are around, set an example by using media the way you want them to use it. Don't bring cell phones and Blackberries to the dinner table, turn the TV off when it's not actively being watched. Use a VCR or TiVo to record shows that may be inappropriate for your children to watch — even the news — and watch them at a later time when kids are not around.

## Keep an eye on the clock

Media is fun and our kids love it. But kids can have too much of a good thing. Keep an eye on how long kids spend online, in front of the TV, watching movies, playing video games. The secret to healthy media use is to establish time limits and stick to them — before your kids turn on and tune in.



Common Sense Media, an independent nonprofit, is dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing the trustworthy information, education, and independent voice they need to thrive in a world of media and technology.