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Comfort Play
& Teach:

A Positive Approach to Parenting™

Every Day

Enjoying TV, DVDs, Computer Games and the Internet with Your Child

If it is too hot, humid or smoggy, or summer rain showers keep your child indoors, he or she may spend more time watching television, viewing DVDs, playing computer games or visiting various sites on the Internet. While there are many excellent programs and movies to watch, as well as child-friendly and age-appropriate computer games and websites, it is important to know how to help your child make good choices and to safely enjoy their indoor activities. Here are a few **Comfort, Play & Teach**™ ideas to share with your family.

When watching television:

- **Limit your child's TV viewing to two hours a day.** Provide your child with a few acceptable choices and encourage him to decide which program he prefers. He will know that you care about what he is seeing on television by helping him to make good choices.
- **Try to watch, or be close by, whenever your child is watching TV,** and then take time to talk to her about the program she has seen. This will turn an otherwise solitary activity into a social experience for your child and help you to discover what she has just learned.
- **Try to organize activities for the time immediately after a TV program, so your child feels eager to get involved in something else.** Encourage her interest in activities such as reading, drawing, putting on a puppet show, playing with other children or exercising, so she will always have alternatives to watching TV.





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When viewing DVDs:

- **Watch movies before your child does**, to ensure that there are no violent or scary scenes, or frightening characters that might be upsetting to your child. Movies may also contain stereotypical content that is not appropriate. Take the time to select movies that convey positive messages and will be truly enjoyed.
- **Plan a special afternoon or evening to enjoy viewing movies together as a family.** This provides an excellent opportunity to share some quality time together, and also to talk to your child about what he has just seen and what he understands about the characters and story line.
- **Explore different kinds of DVDs with your child** such as movies, cartoons, animated storybooks, documentaries about animals or other interesting topics. This lets your child know that there is a variety to select from, and helps her to develop her own tastes and preferences for viewing.

When playing computer games:

- **Make sure that the games are in the living area or family room.** This will prevent your child from constantly playing alone and will encourage important social interactions with others. An added bonus is that you can monitor your child's playing habits and ensure that any games being played are appropriate.
- **Limit the time spent playing computer games to one or two hours** (keeping in mind how much television your child watches as well). Encourage your child to enjoy a variety of activities, even when stuck indoors. Try cooking, dancing to music, putting on a puppet show or creating sculptures from recyclables.





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- **Remember that there are lots of benefits to your child playing computer games.** These include learning to use a mouse and keyboard, finding and storing files, and printing a document. Computer literacy will be useful and essential to your child in school and eventually at work.

When using the Internet:

- **Explore the Internet with your child.** Introduce him to the worthwhile websites available to him and then use these together. If you come across a questionable website, exit it, but explain why. This shows your concern and desire to help your child recognize information that is not appropriate for him.
- **There are many engaging and appropriate websites that will provide your child with math, language and creative activities** that can help to prepare her for school. As you find websites that your preschooler really enjoys, bookmark these to enable her to visit them on her own.
- **Establish rules with your preschooler about how much time she can spend using the Internet,** when she may be on-line and which sites she can visit. Involving her in decision-making lets her know that you respect her. It also enables you to remind her of what she agreed to, if she occasionally forgets the rules.





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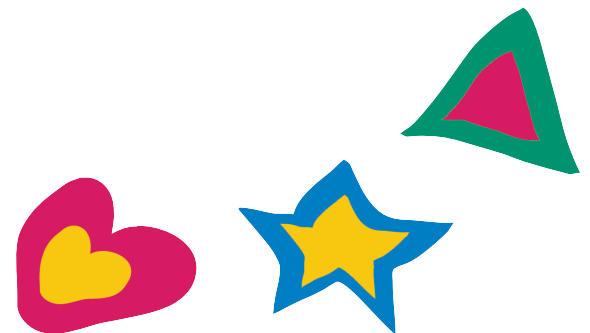
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Keeping Your Preschooler Safe When Using the Internet

More and more, preschoolers are using computers to visit websites and send e-mails. While the internet can be an amazing learning tool and an enjoyable way to communicate with friends, it might also expose your child to inappropriate materials and potentially unsafe situations. Here are some **Comfort, Play & Teach**™ tips that will help you and your child to have experiences with the Internet that are positive, educational, fun and safe.

Comfort

- Explore the Internet with your child. Introduce him to the worthwhile websites available to him and then use these together. If you come across a questionable website, exit it, but explain why. This shows your concern and desire to help your child recognize information that is not appropriate for him.
- Let your child know that if she sees anything on-line, or receives a message that makes her uncomfortable, she should always tell you. Learn about the websites and filtering software available to help you protect your child when she connects to the Internet, and use them.
- Talk about the sites your child visits and the kind of experiences she has on those sites. If she mentions a new site ask her to take you on a tour. She will feel comforted by the interest you take in her and how she spends time on the Internet.





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Play

- Help your preschooler to maintain a balance between time he spends playing games on the internet and time involved in other activities. Plan events like going to the park, crafts and cooking so your child knows there are many wonderful and interesting alternatives to using the computer.
- There are many engaging and appropriate websites that will provide your child with math, language and creative activities that can help to prepare her for school. As you find websites that your preschooler really enjoys, bookmark these to enable her to visit them on her own.
- The Internet can also offer children the opportunity to explore their creative side with sites where children can create their own art. Try to find these in advance and save them for the days when your child needs a new kind of experience to share with you online.

Teach

- Establish rules with your preschooler about how much time she can spend using the Internet, when she may be on-line and which sites she can visit. Involving her in decision-making lets her know that you respect her. It also enables you to remind her of what she agreed to, if she occasionally forgets the rules.
- Ask your preschooler to teach you about computer and Internet use. You will see what he is able to do and understand and to get a sense of habits he may be developing and websites that he visits frequently. Know your child's interests and give him the guidance needed to use the Internet wisely on his own.
- Follow your child's lead on the Internet and let her take you to the sites she uses and ask him to share his thoughts about the sites he has chosen to share with you. As you talk, his ability to judge sites will be evolving and your understanding of the sites he chooses will be enhanced.





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Q: *TV, Videos and Video Games: How do I ensure they don't harm my child?*

A: Once you've realized that TV, videos and video games are probably going to be a part of your child's life, it's time to figure out how you're going to make sure they don't do more harm than good. The single most important thing you can do is become involved in what your child is watching at home and at school.

Here are some ways to try to ensure your older child feels loved once there's a new baby on the scene:

- **Try to watch, or be close by, whenever your child is watching TV or a video,** and then make sure you talk to him about what he has seen. By doing so, you turn an otherwise solitary activity into a social and learning experience.
- **It's important that you're aware of what good options are available.** For example, suggest or choose certain stations that don't have commercials during children's programming. And select children's videos and games that are educational as well as entertaining. Finding these alternatives may take time, but your efforts will be rewarded.
- **Try to organize activities** for the time immediately after a TV program or video ends, so your child is eager to get involved in something else.





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- **Be wary of letting your child watch programs intended for adults.** Many parents think that very young children can't understand the content of adult programs, such as soap operas, crime shows and news casts. But research is discovering that children might actually be absorbing these scenes. With this in mind, tape "adult shows" for later viewing, when infants and young children aren't present.
- **Finally, it is recommended that you limit your child's TV viewing** to no more than two hours a day. This leaves plenty of time for her to do things like read, draw, play with others and exercise.

For more information visit www.investinkids.ca

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