



Ready To Learn

Build on What You Watch: A Triangle for Learning

Young Children learn by doing- by interacting with the people and objects around them. To learn, they need to experience things again and again. They need to play, to manipulate, to group and repeat.

To get the most from the TV you and your children watch, create a Ready To Learn learning triangle. Our learning triangle is TV that teaches + storybooks + activities – all related to one theme or skill. The learning triangle can follow any order, at any time!



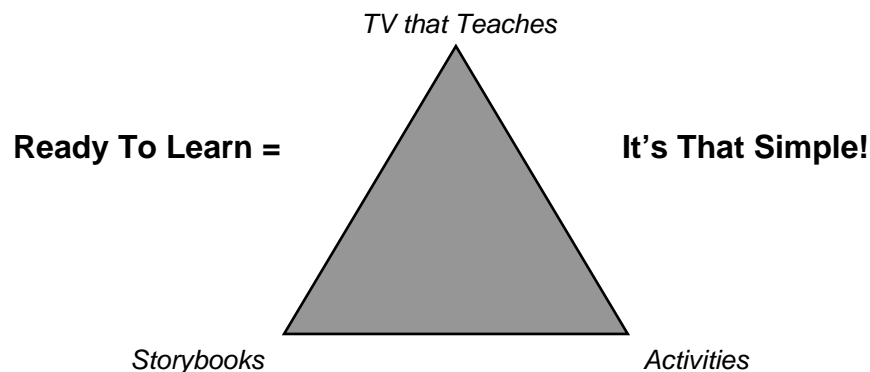
If a Program You Watch Takes You on a Tour of a Pretzel Factory:

- Make pretzels at home – for real or pretend – out of play dough or clay.
- Make a recipe chart of the ingredients needed to make pretzels and talk about measuring and sequencing.
- Before or after watching the program, read a book such as *Bread Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris.
- Even, make a game out of twisting your body up like a pretzel.



If You Watch a Segment About Families from Different Countries:

- Read *How My Family Lives In America* by Susan Kuklin.
- Plan an activity where your children have a chance to tell you/write and illustrate their family customs.
- Visit an international grocery and talk about the variety of foods.
- What other activities celebrate diversity?





Choose Smart TV

Smart TV-- TV that teaches – does so because it is a good match between the social, emotional, and cognitive development skills of an audience. A three-year-old is learning very different skills than a six-year-old.

Smart TV is grounded in a curriculum – a list of things to learn – and each show on PBS has a curriculum. Choose shows and segments (pieces of shows) that have a beginning, middle, and ending – that deal with the very things your children are learning about. Use a VCR to tape a show and pick out the pieces that you want to use. While you're watching – ask questions, sing along, make predictions about what will happen, and have Fun!



Extend the Learning with Books

Find books that are a good match to the topics and concepts of the TV show or segments you watch. Don't be afraid to read the same stories again and again. Read aloud each day and encourage children to look at books on their own. Visit your local library to check out books that compliment the segments you watch. Be sure to share information about the books and topics children study in school or child care or at home with your child's caregivers, teachers and families.

While reading storybooks, stop before the ending and ask children to add their own ending to the story. Add drama to your reading by using different voices for different characters. Collect props and puppets to act stories out! Ask your children to tell you how the story is like what they saw on TV. How is it different? Help the children make connections between what they watch and the stories they read.



Do Activities to Build On What You've Watched

The learning can grow and grow through activities that are a good match to the theme or skill taught in the TV you watch or the storybooks you read with them.

Art activities, outdoor play, science experiments, math games, dramatic and creative play, language and word play, music, and even the routine of everyday living like walks in the park and cooking dinner – all of these and many more can become learning activities that relate to something your children watched on TV. Choose activities that are a good match for your children's abilities and plan ahead of time. Be sure to talk about how the activity is connected to what you watched.



Ready To Learn

Activities to Build On: What You Have Watched

The learning doesn't have to stop after you turn the TV off or close a book. In fact, after you watch something on TV or read a story, the learning can grow and grow.

Below are a few activity ideas for building on what you watch on TV or read in a book. The following activities are related to the goal of developing self-confidence and awareness of others. This is an important goal in all of the programs on PBS.



Make an "I Can Do List"

Hang up a long sheet of paper in a place where your children can see it easily and write the title – "A List of Things I Can Do". Whenever your Children learn a new skill, such as "I can slide" or "I know about dogs," add it to the list.



Celebrate Your Children's Work

Create a special area to display your children's artwork, drawings, and graphs. If you watch a show on kites and then make kites, include a sign that says something like, "We learned to make kites." Or. "We took a nature walk." Let your children choose what gets put up and when it should be taken down.



Do Activities with your Kids

These next two activities relate to the goal of nurturing your children's imagination-- a goal that is important in all of the programs and services that make up Ready To Learn.

✓ Play the "What-If Game"

This is a good activity for long car rides, waiting in lines, or drying off after a bath. Give your children a situation and ask them to figure out what should happen. "What is you got to day care and your new teacher was a giraffe?" Use examples from the programs you watch to talk about how to solve problems. For instance, "What is – name a character in a show you've watched – didn't finish his/her homework? What did he/ she do? What would you do is you didn't finish your homework?"

✓ **Play the “Continuing Story Game”**

Start a story and stop right in the middle of a sentence. For instance, “One day, when I was in the park and saw three elephants...” Ask your children to add to the story and to stop when they want you to take it over. Keep the story going until one of you comes up with an ending.

These next two activities relate to the goal of thinking about what we hear and see. These are goals important to school readiness and are a part of many programs on PBS.

✓ **Become “Sound Detectives”**

Pick a place to go for a walk with your children. Perhaps to”

The park

A grocery store

The post office

A place you saw on TV

A construction site or a where a new house is being built

Encourage your children to listen to all of the sounds they hear along the way. Then:

Help your children name each sound

Write them down

After the walk, ask your children how many things on the list they can remember. Read the list together and imitate the sounds.

If you go on several trips you can put your lists together and a “Sounds in My Neighborhood” book.

✓ **Play the “Look Closely Game”**

Gather together a few indoor and outdoor objects, such as leaves, stones, paper napkins, and coins. Don't be afraid to use someone's newly lost tooth, hair, a bug, or a spider web! Let your children look at the objects under a magnifying glass. Describe how it looks, both with and without the magnifying glass. Encourage them to draw what they see and label their drawings.



Ready To Learn

Guidelines for Rating Children's Television

Smart TV – TV that teaches – is often intended to be content based: it is about “what” children need to learn. For instance, some programs teach children specific skills and topics like the letters of the alphabet or friction. But smart TV can also be process based – and this reflects “how” children learn. And, of course, many of the shows on PBS are a mixture of both!

Every child is unique and develops at his/her own pace and learns in his/her own way. Spend time talking with your children about what they like to watch on TV and why. Watch TV together and choose shows that are a good match for what your child needs to learn and how they learn best!

Here are some guidelines to help you judge what kinds of programs will be beneficial for your children.



Television is a **Good Thing** When It:

- ✗ Is developmentally appropriate – a good match between your children's growing needs and the subject matter of a show.
- ✗ Encourages creativity and critical thinking.
- ✗ Introduces your children to the skills and ideas they need to learn.
- ✗ Models ways to solve problems, to cooperate, and get along with others.
- ✗ Engages your children to sing along, dance along, ask questions and respond.
- ✗ Entertains **and** teaches, too!
- ✗ Reinforces the values that are important to you.
- ✗ Helps your children to appreciate other families, communities, and cultures.
- ✗ Inspires your children to want to learn more and read.



Television is a **Problem** When It:

- ✗ Occupies too much of your children's time.
- ✗ Doesn't help you teach your children the values that are important to you.
- ✗ Teaches your children ideas, words, or behavior you feel you have to “unteach.”
- ✗ Is not created for an audience of children, when it is too “adult.”
- ✗ Exposes children to violence as a means of problem solving.
- ✗ Models gender, racial or cultural stereotypes.
- ✗ Encourages children to think that they need to buy products.



Ready To Learn

Not All TV is for Kids

We might think it is educational for children to watch the news to find out more about the world. Unfortunately, too much TV news focuses on events that are shocking or dramatic. It often shows clips of disasters, attacks, and other kinds of human suffering. TV news stories are written for grown-ups. They do not provide the kind of details and important perspectives that children need in order to understand the world around them.

Because younger children have limited experiences in the world, they lack the “lens” that adults have to understand and digest events. Fragmented pictures and sound bites that come across on news programs can be very disturbing.

Help your children learn about the world from places you take them, the stories you tell them, the books you read to them and television shows that are designed especially for their age group and level of understanding.



A Word about Violence...

At first, most children find violent images upsetting. But as they get used to them—when seen over and over again – the images become routine, less frightening, and often accepted as real possibilities.

Even the fighting on cartoon shows and video games can encourage your children to see violence as an acceptable way to respond to problems and conflicts. Be sure to choose TV – like shows on PBS – to introduce children to other ways to resolve problems peacefully. Share the TV experience with your children and be around to talk to them about what they’ve seen on TV.



And Keep in Mind...

If the “bad Guys” are funny looking, disfigured, speak differently or are members of a minority group, it may send a message that badness is linked to the way you look or that people who look different are bad.

If children see that women or older people are always shown as helpless and always in need of men to take care of them, then children may accept that women aren’t strong, capable or smart.

When young children see “heroes” use violence to solve problems they may think that force is an acceptable way for “good guys” to get things done.



Ready To Learn

Choosing the Best for Your Children

All TV teaches young children something. Any program your child watches – whether *Sesame Street* or wrestling – teaches them something but it is important to ask: What is it you want your children to learn?

Smart TV – TV that teaches – does so because it is a good match between the social, emotional, and cognitive developmental skills of an audience. A three-year-old is learning very different skills and concepts that a six-year-old.

Smart TV is grounded in child growth and development and each show on PBS has a curriculum – a list of things to learn. The producers, the stars, and the writers work together to make sure the storyline, the puppets and/or characters, the music, the scripts are built around a “hidden curriculum.” PBS gives you TV that entertains and teaches, too!



TV that Teaches:

- ✘ Encourages creativity and critical thinking.
- ✘ Shows people getting along with one another and characters who respect each other.
- ✘ Shows there are many ways to solve problems without using force or violence.
- ✘ Promotes a sense of well-being, a sense of feeling good about who you are.
- ✘ Invites children to sing along, answer questions, dance, and join in the fun.
- ✘ Allows time for children to think about the questions asked. For instance, when Mister Rogers asks, “Do you know which one is an apple?” he allows time for the children at home to give their answers.
- ✘ Reinforces the very things your children have been learning.
- ✘ Inspires children to want to learn more.
- ✘ Helps children feel good about their own and other people’s cultures, family routines, and communities.

Children watch you watch TV, too! Show them that you are careful about what you watch. Be a good role model. Talk with them about your likes and dislikes. And, don’t be afraid to tell them that some shows are for grown-ups, and not for children.

Choose Smart TV – TV that teaches!



Ready To Learn

Using Television within a Child Care Program

There are many good programs on PBS. But no television can replace the important daily activities you do with the children in your care. Fortunately, you can use TV to enrich your curriculum and lesson plans. Television will help you the most if you use it selectively and sparingly. The following tips will be helpful:



Use the VCR!

Tape the programs that you think are appropriate to use with your children. A VCR tape can help in many ways!

- ✗ You can review the show(s), choose the segments you think are most useful, select books and plan activities you will want to do with the group.
- ✗ You can STOP or PAUSE a tape to ask questions.
- ✗ You can watch a favorite segment again and again.
- ✗ You can fit it into your schedule!

If you cannot tape ahead of time, select programs that are specifically tailored to the age group you are caring for.



Use a TV Guide

Learn about the show from its title. Look for shows that highlight the very things you want your children to learn.

- ✗ Be ready with activities that can follow up any topic you watch on TV: whether you watch a show about whales or a show about bulldozers, some activities can fit anything.
- ✗ Be ready to write a group story, make up a play, or go to the library and find books.



Encourage Your Children to Respond...

By responding to what they see and hear on television, you can break the mold – TV can be so much more than “sit quietly and listen.”

- ✗ Encourage your children to ask question, talk about what they see, imitate what they're watching, and dance along.
- ✗ Let them know they are free to come and go as they please.
- ✗ Have other activities or centers available so children never feel they are confined to sit at the TV.



Triangle of Learning

Think of the TV segment or show you are viewing with the children as one point in a triangle of learning. Reading and related activities are the other important points—all three come together to spark learning.

- ✘ If you watch a segment about cooperation, follow it up with a good story that also shows characters cooperating.
- ✘ Do an activity about cooperating: make a list of the chores that must be done and talk about good helpers. Or, build a block tower together.
- ✘ Refer back to the segment they watched: ask question—why is cooperating important?

Young children need lots of repetition in order to understand and digest new ideas. Use TV, books, and related activities again and again to reinforce the learning.



Ready To Learn

Extend the Learning with Books



Learning to Read Begins Early –

Learning to read begins long before an infant can understand what you are saying. Reading with children can become a special way to spend time together and helps young children to:

- ✗ Develop language and listening skills
- ✗ Build vocabulary
- ✗ Learn the relationship between sounds they hear and written words
- ✗ Understand the world around them
- ✗ Express themselves
- ✗ Become good listeners



Smart TV – TV that Teaches

Smart TV can lead your children to good books! If you see a TV show about dogs, choose books about dogs to read with your children. If a show is about cooperation, read a story in which the characters work together towards a common goal. Here are a few more tips for bringing TV and books together.

- ✗ Talk about the story in a book and the TV show you watched. How are they alike? How are they different? Encourage your children to talk about how the book and TV show are like the things they do at home or in their school.
- ✗ Encourage your children to read to you. After you have read a book again and again, encourage pre-readers to “read” it to you. Encourage them to use the pictures to tell you the story from memory. They may skip some parts or get a few details wrong – but that’s okay!
- ✗ Help your children to write their own books based on stories you’ve read and programs you’ve watched. Ask children about what story they would like to write. Have materials available so they can write their own story ideas. For children who need help, write down their words exactly as they

say them. Encourage them to draw pictures for their story. Ask them to read their stories to you and to others again and again.

- ✘ Share all kinds of stories: stories about your day, your childhood, fantasies, and classic tales. Some shows bring a wide range of stories into your home. Check out books from your local library. Finding books at garage sales can be an inexpensive way to encourage your child's love for reading.



Make Reading Time Special

Turn off the TV, find a comfortable space to be together, and enjoy sharing the pleasure of a special story. Set aside a special time each day – maybe after breakfast or before a nap – to share a book or two together!