Teacher Tool Kit Index

To: Teachers in Missoula County Public Schools
From: Missoula City-County Health Department

Missoula is once again celebrating Screen-Free Week this April with a campaign called **"Unplay and Play!"** "Unplug and Play!" challenges families to turn off all recreational screens for the week and reap the many benefits. We want to encourage Missoula kids and their families to get outside, spend more time at unstructured play, re-connect with friends and neighbors, and become more aware of Missoula's endless opportunities for screen-free fun and relaxation.

Screen-Free Week is a global campaign from the Center for Screen-Time Awareness and is designated for **April 18-24, 2011.** Missoula's celebration, "Unplug and Play!" seeks to educate families about the detrimental effects of too much "screen time": television, computers, gaming systems, iPods, and cell phones. **Screen time cuts into family time and is a leading cause of obesity in both adults and children**. **American children spend as much time watching TV as they spend in school or doing any other activity besides sleep**. Screen-Free Week is supported by national organizations including the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Education Association, and President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

We would like to encourage you to participate in "Unplug and Play!" Week by incorporating it into your classroom sometime during the week of April 18th through 24th by:

- Incorporating physical activity into your lesson plan
- Sending home the attached Screen Smart Parents tip sheet with students
- Offering incentives to children who read at home instead of watching TV
- Download the live outside the box toolkit available at http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthServices/health/chronic/overweight/reducetv.aspx
- Visiting the teacher's page on the national screen-free website for additional ideas http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/screenfreeweek/index.html
- Sample lesson plans that integrate tuning out the TV into the curriculum and additional resources can be found at http://www.eatwellandkeepmoving.org/teacherInformation.cfm

I have included more information about "Unplug and Play!" below.

"Unplug and Play!" Description and Details:

Unplug and Play! Week 2011: April 18th - 24th www.unplugmissoula.org

Why "Unplug and Play?"

Excessive use of screens for recreational purposes leads to a more sedentary and solitary lifestyle and that is unhealthy for all of us, both mentally and physically. Because watching TV means being inactive while viewing,

snacking more, and getting exposed to lots of advertising for high fat, high sugar foods. Kids who watch several hours of TV each day are vulnerable to the effects of violent content, and school performance can suffer if TV gets in the way of time spent on activities such as reading and homework.

Who Participates?

Anyone and everyone. Millions of people around the world participate in Turnoff Week (Unplug and Play!) Children and adults, rich and poor - people from every background and all walks of life - **take part through schools**, churches, or community groups, as families or individuals and even at work.

What's So Great about "Unplug and Play!"?

Turning off the screen gives us time to think, read, create, and do the things we never have time for. This allows us to connect with our families and engage in our communities. We feel good about ourselves as we grow more physically and mentally active.

"I really didn't like TV-Turnoff Week except that I did notice that my grades went up and I was in a good mood all week." - Second grader Drew Henderson, Donora, PA

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Unplug and Play!

April 18-24

Do More, Watch Less
A week dedicated to reducing screen time

Free kick off event April 17
1 to 4pm in McCormick Park

- Hang out with Mauler mascot, SLASH!,
- Play games with UM Grizzly Athletes
- Visit with Opsrey mascot, Ollie
- Play tennis, basketball, softball, jump rope, folf,
- Arts and Crafts
- Race around the pond with Missoula Kids Marathon
- Hellgate Rollergirls
- Climb the rock wall
- Healthy snacks & much more!

FREE!!!
Parents accompany your kids to a day full of fun at the kick off event

McCormick Park event generously sponsored by: Missoula Parks & Rec, Missoula City-County Health Department, Community Medical Center, & United Way.

UNPLUG AND PLAY!

Teachers Can Set A Good Example

Help families reduce their screen time by helping kids develop screen free behaviors in the classroom

- **Read books with kids**
- **Talk about what kids enjoy besides screen time**
- **Use math class to fill out a screen time log and graph the results**
- **Involve parents; have each family fill out a screen log and compare results**
- **Have kids make collages or drawings of favorite activities that don't involve screen time**
- **Send a handout home to parents about screen time and its effects on children**
- **Have screen free contests for students**
- **Join forces with other teachers, PTA members, community centers, etc. to help encourage children to reduce screen time**
- **TEACHERS: visit our website www.unplugmissoula.org for more research**

PLEDGE CARD

Our Family _____ is participating in Screen-Free Week 2011, April 18-24. We pledge to: 1) reduce our TV time, play fewer DVD's, videogames and use the computer only for required homework assignments 2)encourage our friends and other family members to reduce their screen time 3) explore new screen-free activities and 4) HAVE FUN! Phone # _____

Instead of spending time with screens, we will:

_____

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DID YOU KNOW???

- Researchers have discovered that middle school students who watch more TV, play more video games, and have more cable channels available during the week are less likely to do as well in school than students with less screen time exposure and cable availability.
- Children who watch a lot of TV and videos have weaker language skills than other children
- Background TV can interfere with free play time, quality time with family, strong language development and sleep quality—all of which predict success with learning
- Young children develop strong vocabularies and other language skills—which strongly predict school success—from hearing many words spoken and read directly to them each day by family members and caregivers
- Active free play helps young children develop imagination, creativity, and problem solving ability—all of which lead to positive, health promoting lifelong skills

- In a recent study of 6-13 year olds, children reported using screen media for nearly 5 ½ hours a day. When asked to provide a drawing of their favorite thing to do when they were not in school, 57% identified in-home media (TV, videogames, or computers) as a favorite activity. By comparison, only about a quarter of children featured sports or physical activities in their drawings.
- Researchers have found an association between hours spent watching TV and childhood obesity. As the number of hours spent watching TV increases so does the body fat percentage and risk of obesity.
- Currently, one third of American children and youth are either overweight or obese. Over the past 30 years, the obesity rate has quadrupled for children ages 5 to 10 years (from 4 to 19 percent).
- An estimated 61% of obese children, ages 5 to 10 years, already have at least one cardiovascular disease risk factor (such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol), and over 25% of obese children have two or more risk factors.

Less Screen Time Opens Doors to Literacy and Learning

There's one sure thing parents can do to help their kids learn, regardless of financial means: Forbid them from watching television on school nights.

– **PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA**

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Children today are spending more time with screens than in any activity but sleeping. That's time away from all kinds of constructive activities, including reading and homework. The President has also urged limits on some kinds of entertainment screen media because of their impact on learning, urging parents to read to their children instead.[1]

Because television has been around much longer than other entertainment screen media, most of the research about the impact of screen time on children focuses on television.

Research demonstrates that hours spent with screens can have a negative impact on learning.

- **The amount of television viewing before age 3 has been associated with deficits in reading recognition, reading comprehension, and being able to remember sequences of numbers at age 6.**[2]
- **Children who spend less time watching television in early years tend to do better in school, have a healthier diet, be more physically active, and be better able to engage in schoolwork in later elementary school.**[3]
- **Adolescents who watch 3 or more hours of television daily are at especially high risk for poor homework completion, negative attitudes toward school, poor grades, and long-term academic failure.**[4]
- **Boys who spend more time playing video games spend less time on after-school academic materials, and have lower reading and writing scores.**[5]

One complicating factor for parents today is that many screen-media products are marketed as educational for young children, and that there are no standards for determining what

"educational" means. It's been shown, despite promotional materials to the contrary, that DVDs for babies and toddlers are not an effective means of promoting language development,[6] and may even be detrimental.[7]

In addition, companies also market computer software for children that they claim promotes reading. Studies show, however, that these programs may also be problematic.

- **Operating the mouse while reading a story on the computer requires more executive functioning skills than turning pages of a book, which means that some children are not able to simultaneously operate the mouse and comprehend the story.**[8]
- **When parents and children interact with electronic console books, parents are less likely to use the kind of verbal interactions that promote literacy. They tend to talk more about behavior (e.g.,"Can you click on this?") than respond to the content (e.g., "What's the elephant going to next?").**[9]
- **When children read from electronic console books, they spend more time pushing buttons than reading the story, which results in poorer character identification, less story comprehension, and more impoverished parent-child interactions than reading from traditional books.**[10]

There is some evidence that truly educational screen media, such as programs on PBS, actually can promote learning and literacy in children. There is also evidence that what content children are exposed to matters. Exposure to violent R-rated or PG-13 movies, and violent video games, can promote aggressive behaviors that can cause problems in the classroom[11] and is also linked to poor school performance.[12]

But it is important to remember that excessive time spent with screens, regardless of content, is a problem. Use Screen-Free Week as an opportunity to read aloud more to kids, to encourage their own reading and creative writing projects—or just to engage more in conversation. All of those activities are fun—and promote literacy.

Literacy Action Steps for Screen-Free Week and All Year Round:

- **Books! Books! And more books!**
- **Visit the library or your local book store.**
- **Eat screen-free meals together and talk!**
- **Play word games.**
- **Tell stories.**
- **Draw pictures and tell stories about them.**
- **Encourage young children to dictate stories.**
- **Read poems out loud.**
- **Make up poems and rhymes**

Obama to parents: School nights for homework, not TV (2010, Feb. 16). *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved February 7, 2011 from http:// www.chicagotribune.com/news/politics/obama/ct-talk-obama-kids-television-0217-20100216,0,1883059.story.

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Why Screen-Free Week?

Source: Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, 2011 Toolkit.

Active Living Research

Building Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity
and Support Active Communities

RESEARCH BRIEF | *Summer 2009*

activelivingresearch.org

Active Education

Physical Education, Physical Activity and Academic Performance

In schools across the United States, physical education has been substantially reduced—and in some cases completely eliminated—in response to budget concerns and pressures to improve academic test scores. Yet the available evidence shows that children who are physically active and fit tend to perform better in the classroom and that daily physical education does not adversely affect academic performance. Schools can provide outstanding learning environments while improving children's health through physical education.

Schools and Physical Activity

Today, obesity is one of the most pressing health concerns for children. Nearly one-third of children and teens, more than 23 million kids, are overweight or obese—and physical inactivity is a leading contributor to the epidemic. The Surgeon General recommends children should engage in 60 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week, yet estimates show that only 3.8 percent of elementary schools provide daily physical education (PE).[1]

Schools serve as an excellent venue to provide students with the opportunity for daily physical activity, to teach the importance of regular physical activity for health, and to build skills that support active lifestyles. Unfortunately, most children get little to no regular physical activity while in school.

Budgetary constraints and increasing pressure to improve standardized test scores have caused school officials to question the value of PE and other physical activity programs. This has led to a substantial reduction in the time available for PE, and in some cases, school-based physical activity programs have been completely eliminated.[2] Yet advocates for school-based physical activity programs argue that allocating time for daily PE does not adversely impact academic performance, and that regular exercise may improve students' concentration and cognitive functioning.[3–6]

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

A national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with direction and technical assistance provided by San Diego State University.

Key Research Results

Sacrificing physical education for classroom time does not improve academic performance

This summary of peer-reviewed research on the relationship between physical activity and academic performance among children and adolescents yields the following insights:

Many school systems have downsized or eliminated PE under the assumption that more classroom time will improve academic performance and increase standardized test scores. The available evidence from several controlled experimental studies in the United States,[7] Canada,[8–10] and Australia[11, 12] contradicts this view. All of these studies evaluated how additional instructional time for PE impacts academic performance, and clearly demonstrate that physical activity need not be sacrificed for academic excellence.

- In 2007, 287 fourth- and fifth-grade students in British Columbia were evaluated to determine if introducing daily classroom physical activity sessions affected their academic performance.[13] Students in the intervention group participated in daily 10-minute classroom activity sessions in addition to having 80 minutes of PE per week. Despite increasing in-school physical activity time by approximately 50 minutes per week, students receiving the extra physical activity time had similar standardized test scores for mathematics, reading and language arts as did students in the control group.
- In 1999, researchers analyzed data from 759 fourth- and fifth-grade students in California and found that students' scores on standardized achievement tests were not adversely affected by an intensive PE program that doubled or tripled PE time. On several test scores, students who spent more time in PE performed better than students in control groups.[14]

Within the United States, results from a national longitudinal study[15] and observational data from two studies that compared test scores of children who were exposed to different amounts of PE instructional time have shown that more time in PE does not adversely affect academic performance.[16, 17]

- Girls who were enrolled in PE for 70 or more minutes per week had significantly higher achievement scores in mathematics and reading than did girls who were enrolled in PE for 35 or fewer minutes per week, according to the National Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. Researchers analyzed a nationally representative sample of more than 5,000 students from the 1998–99 kindergarten class as they progressed through grade 5. Among boys, greater exposure to PE was neither positively or negatively associated with academic achievement.[18]
- A study of more than 200 sixth-grade students in Michigan, conducted in 2006, found that students enrolled in PE had similar grades and standardized test scores as students who were not enrolled in PE, despite receiving 55 fewer minutes of daily classroom instruction.[19]
- A study of 311 fourth-grade students in southeastern Massachusetts found that students who received 56 or more hours of PE per school year scored significantly higher on standardized test scores in English and language arts than did students who received 28 hours of PE per school year. The study, which was conducted in 2000–01, found no significant differences on standardized mathematics test scores.[20]

Kids who are more physically active tend to perform better academically

Fourteen published studies analyzing data from approximately 58,000 students between 1967 and 2006 have investigated the link between overall participation in physical activity and academic performance. Eleven of those studies found regular participation in physical activity is associated with improved academic performance.

Eight health surveys involving population-representative samples of children and adolescents from the United States,[21–23] United Kingdom,[24–26] Hong Kong[27] and Australia[28] observed statistically significant, positive correlations between physical activity participation and academic performance. However, none of these studies assessed academic performance with standardized educational tests.

- One of the studies, conducted in the United States in 2006, analyzed national data collected from nearly 12,000 adolescents to examine the relationship between physical activity and academic performance. Adolescents who reported either participating in school-based physical activities, such as PE and team sports, or playing sports with their parents were 20 percent more likely than their sedentary peers to earn an "A" in math or English.[29]

Three other smaller studies conducted between 1970 and 2006 involving students from one or two schools also reported a positive correlation between physical activity and academic performance.[30–32]

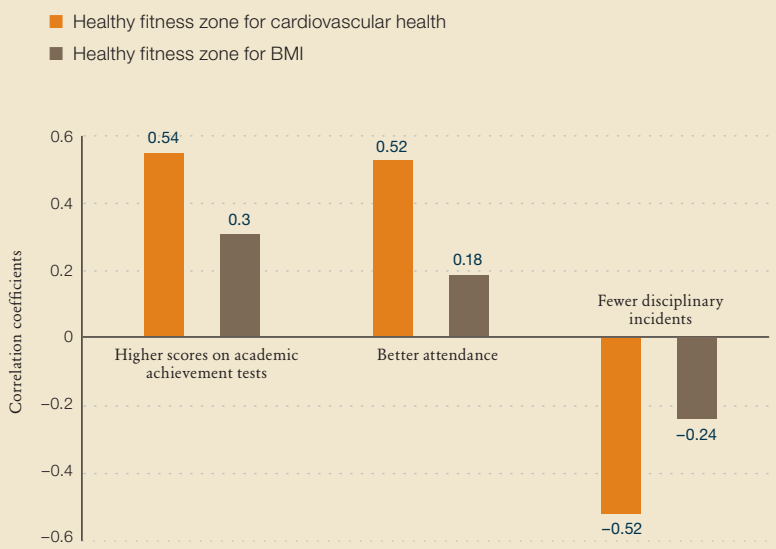
- Two studies found no evidence of a relationship, positive or negative, between physical activity and academic performance,[33,34] and one study conducted in Canada in 2000 reported a trivial negative association between physical activity and standardized test scores.[35]

Kids who are physically fit are likely to have stronger academic performance

Evidence supporting the association between physical activity and enhanced academic performance is strengthened by findings that link higher levels of physical fitness with improved academic performance among children and teens. Two national studies, in Australia[36] and South Korea,[37] along with four studies conducted in the United States,[38–41] found physical fitness scores to be significantly and positively associated with academic performance. These studies included students from elementary school through high school.

- Researchers analyzed FITNESSGRAM® test results from more than 2.4 million Texas students in grades 3 to 12 during the 2007–08 school year and found significant school-level correlations between physical fitness achievement and better performance on state standardized tests. Higher physical fitness achievement also was associated with better school attendance rates and fewer disciplinary incidents involving drugs, alcohol, violence or truancy. Associations were stronger for cardiovascular fitness than for measures of body mass index (BMI), but the patterns were consistent. The analyses controlled for potential confounding variables, such as socioeconomic status, minority status and school size, that could influence the correlations. The study is currently in review, and as of August 2009, these data were unpublished.[42]

Student Fitness and BMI Levels Correlate with Test Performance, Attendance and Disciplinary Incidents[43]



- A cross-sectional study of 2004–05 data from 1,800 Massachusetts middle-school students found that students who passed more fitness tests during physical education performed better on achievement tests in math and English than did students who had poorer fitness test results.[44]

Link Between Academic Performance and Fitness Tests Among Middle-School Students[45]

- According to a 2007 study of 259 third- and fifth-grade students, children who performed better on aerobic capacity fitness tests were more likely to score higher on state math and reading exams.[46]

Activity breaks can improve cognitive performance and classroom behavior

According to seven studies involving elementary-school students,[47–53] and one survey of elementary- and middle-school administrators,[54] regular physical activity breaks during the school day may enhance academic performance, academic focus and/or behavior in the classroom. It is important to note that cognitive and behavioral responses to physical activity breaks during the school day have not been systematically investigated among middle- or high-school students.

- Teachers reported better classroom behavior for students who had more than 15 minutes of daily recess, according to an analysis of 1998–99 data for approximately 11,000 students ages 8 to 9. Thirty percent of students in the study had little or no daily recess. Further analysis showed that only 7 percent to 14 percent of black, Hispanic and low-income students had daily recess, compared with 54 percent to 67 percent of white and affluent students.[55]
- A 2008 survey of representatives from 106 North Carolina school districts found that improved academic focus among students was the most widely cited benefit of a statewide policy mandating at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity for students in kindergarten through grade 8. Improvement in students' focus was reported by 27 percent of elementary-school officials and 15 percent of middle-school officials.[56]
    - Other results from the survey showed increased student alertness (reported by 17% of elementary- and middle-school officials) and improved student behavior (reported by 12% of elementary-school officials and 8% of middle-school officials).[57]
- In 1998, researchers in Georgia studied the effects of an activity break on classroom behavior in a sample of 43 fourth-grade students. Students exhibited significantly more on-task classroom behavior and significantly less fidgeting on days with a scheduled activity break than on days without one.[58]
- A 12-week research project conducted in North Carolina in 2006 evaluated the effects of providing elementary-school students with a daily 10-minute activity break. Among 243 students in kindergarten through grade 4, a break without physical activity decreased on-task behavior, but a daily physical activity break increased on-task behavior significantly— by an average of 8 percent. Among the least on-task students, activity breaks improved on-task behavior by 20 percent.[59]
- In a study conducted in 1999 with 177 New Jersey elementary-school students, researchers compared scores on a concentration test after students completed either a classroom lesson or a 15-minute physical activity session. Fourth-grade students exhibited significantly better concentration scores after completing the physical activity. Among second- and third-grade students, the physical activity intervention was neither beneficial nor detrimental to test performance.[60]

Conclusion

- Studies consistently show that more time in physical education and other school-based physical activity does not adversely affect academic performance.
- In some cases, more time in physical education leads to improved grades and standardized test scores.
- Physically active and fit children tend to have better academic achievement.
- Evidence links higher levels of physical fitness with better school attendance and fewer disciplinary problems.
- There are several possible mechanisms by which physical education and regular physical activity could improve academic achievement, including enhanced concentration skills and classroom behavior.
- Additional research is needed to determine the impact of physical activity on academic performance among those children who are at highest risk for obesity in the United States, including black, Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Asian-American and Pacific Islander children, as well as children living in lower-income communities.

Additional research on academic achievement and physical activity presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is available at *www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/health_and_academics/index.htm*.

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Active Living Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, stimulates and supports research to identify environmental factors and policies that influence physical activity for children and families to inform effective childhood obesity prevention strategies, particularly in low-income and racial/ethnic communities at highest risk. Active Living Research wants solid research to be part of the public debate about active living.

This report was prepared by Stewart G. Trost, Ph.D., associate professor, Department of Nutrition and Exercise Sciences at Oregon State University, with support from the Active Living Research staff.

Visit *www.activelivingresearch.org* for a Web-based version and other updates.

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Kids and Screens

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under 2 and less than 2 hours per day for older children.

Excessive screen time puts young children at risk.

• Forty percent of 3-month-old infants are regular viewers of screen media *[2]*, and 19% of babies 1 year and under have a TV in their bedroom *[3]*.

• Screen time can be habit-forming: the more time children engage with screens, the harder time they have turning them off as older children. *[4]*

• Screen time for children under 3 is linked to irregular sleep patterns *[5]* and delayed language acquisition *[6]*.

• The more time preschool children and babies spend with screens, the less time they spend interacting with their parents. *[7]* Even when parents co-view, they spend less time talking to their children than when they're engaged in other activities. *[8]*

• Toddler screen time is also associated with problems in later childhood, including lower math and school achievement, reduced physical activity, victimization by classmates *[9]*, and increased BMI [10].

• Direct exposure to TV and overall household viewing are associated with increased early childhood aggression. *[11]*

• The more time preschool children spend with screens, the less time they spend engaged in creative play *[7]* – the foundation of learning *[12]*, constructive problem solving *[13]*, and creativity *[14]*.

• On average, preschool children see nearly 25,000 television commercials, a figure that does not include product placement. *[15]*

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents create an electronic-media-free environment in children's bedrooms.

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School-age children are also at risk from excessive screen time.

In a survey of youth ages 8-18, nearly 1 in 4 said they felt "addicted" to video games. *[25]*

• Including multitasking, children ages 8 -18 spend average of 4 ½ hours per day watching television, 1 ½ hours using computers, and more than an hour playing video games. *[16]*

• Black and Hispanic youth spend even more time with screen media than their White peers. *[16]*

• Time spent with screens is associated with:
  » childhood obesity *[17]*
  » sleep disturbances *[18]*
  » attention span issues *[19]*

• Children with 2 or more hours of daily screen time are more likely to have increased psychological difficulties, including hyperactivity, emotional and conduct problems, as well as difficulties with peers. *[20]*

• Adolescents who watch 3 or more hours of television daily are at especially high risk for poor homework completion, negative attitudes toward school, poor grades, and long-term academic failure. *[21]*

• Adolescents with a television in their bedroom spend more time watching TV and report less physical activity, less healthy dietary habits, worse school performance, and fewer family meals. *[22]*

• Children with a television in their bedroom are more likely to be overweight. *[23]*

• Especially high rates of bedroom televisions (70-74%) have been seen among racial/ethnic minority children aged 2 to 13 years. *[24]*

Research shows the benefits of reduced screen time.

• Reducing screen time can help prevent childhood obesity. *[26]*

• Children who spend less time watching television in early years tend to do better in school, have a healthier diet, be more physically active, and are better able to engage in schoolwork in later elementary school. *[9]*

• Television viewing at a young age is associated with later behavioral problems, but not if heavy viewing is discontinued before age 6. *[27]*

• Limiting exposure to television during the first 4 years of life may decrease children's interest in it in later years. *[4]*

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101 Screen-Free Activities

At Home

1. Listen to the radio.
2. Write an article or story.
3. Paint a picture, a mural or a room.
4. Write to the President, your Representative or Senator.
5. Read a book. Read to someone else.
6. Learn to change the oil or a tire on a car. Fix something.
7. Write a letter to a friend or relative.
8. Make cookies, bread or jam and share with a neighbor.
9. Read magazines or newspapers. Swap them with friends.
10. Go through your closets and donate items to Goodwill, the Salvation Army or a local rummage sale. Have a garage sale.
11. Start a diary/journal.
12. Play cards.
13. Make crafts to give as gifts. Try a new craft.
14. Do a crossword puzzle.
15. Save money! Cancel your cable TV!
16. Learn about a different culture. Have an international dinner.
17. Teach a child some of your favorite childhood games.
18. Study sing-language.
19. Write a letter to your favorite author.
20. Cook dinner with friends or family.
21. Make cards for holidays or birthdays.
22. Play chess, bridge or checkers.
23. Play charades.
24. Have a cup of coffee and a conversation.
25. Repair or refinish a piece of furniture.
26. Make a wooden flowerbox.
27. Wake up early and make pancakes.
28. Read a favorite poem.

Turn off the TV, and...

Outdoors

29. Learn about native trees and flowers in your area.
30. Plan a picnic or barbecue.
31. Go bird watching. Learn the names of local birds.
32. Walk the dog. Wash the dog.
33. Plant a garden. Work in your garden.
34. Take a nature hike.
35. Feed fish or birds.
36. Watch the night sky through binoculars; identify different constellations. Observe the moon.
37. Learn to use a compass.
38. Take photographs and then organize them into an album.
39. Do yard work.
40. Go camping.
41. Take an early morning walk.
42. Climb a tree.
43. Watch a sunset; watch the sunrise with a friend.

Around Town

44. Attend a community concert. Listen to a local band.
45. Visit the library. Borrow some books.
46. Visit a local bookstore.
47. Visit the zoo.
48. Visit the countryside or town. Travel by bus or train.
49. Attend a religious service.
50. Walk to work or school.
51. Attend a live sports event.
52. Look for treasures at a yard sale.
53. Try out for a play. Attend a play.
54. Collect recycling and drop it off at a recycling center.
55. Learn to play a musical instrument.
56. Go to a museum.

101 Screen-Free Activities

On the Move

57. Go roller skating or ice skating.
58. Go swimming. Join a community swim team.
59. Start a community group that walks, runs or bikes.
60. Organize a game of touch football, baseball or softball in the local part.
61. Go for a bicycle ride.
62. Learn yoga.
63. Play soccer, softball or volleyball.
64. Play Frisbee.
65. Workout.
66. Go dancing. Take a dance class.

In Your Community

67. Organize a community clean-up or volunteer for charity.
68. Become a tutor.
69. Join a choir. Sing!
70. Start a bowling league.
71. Visit and get to know your neighbors.
72. Start a fiction or public policy book group.

With the Kids

73. Make paper bag costumes and have a parade.
74. Design a poster for the TVTN/Hearthsong contest.
75. Discover your community center or local park activities.
76. Blow bubbles.
77. Mark and color in TV-Turnoff Week on the calendar.
78. Build a fort in the living room and camp out one night.
79. Research your family history and draw a family tree.

80. Invent a new game and teach it to your friends and family.
81. Make a sign to tape across the TV during TV-Turnoff Week.
82. Play hopscotch, hide & Seek or freeze-tag.
83. Organize a neighborhood scavenger hunt.
84. Play board games with family and friends.
85. Clean-up or redecorate your room.
86. Make puppets out of old clean socks and have a puppet show.
87. Write a play with friends. Perform it at a nursing home.
88. Construct a kite. Fly it.
89. Go on a family trip or historical excursing.
90. In the snow, go sledding or make a snowman.
91. Create a collage out of pictures from old magazines.
92. Shoot hoops with friends. Play a round of H.O.R.S.E.
93. Make a friendship bracelet.
94. Draw pictures of members of your family.
95. Tell stories around a campfire.
96. Plan a slumber party.
97. Bake cakes or cookies and invite friends for a tea party.
98. Construct a miniature boat and float it on water.
99. Write a letter to your grandparents. Make a special card.
100. Create sidewalk art with chalk.
101. ***Everyone!!! Have a huge party to celebrate a TV-Free Week!***

TV-Turnoff Network 1200 29th Street, NW, LL #1, Washington, DC 2007
(202)333-9220 fax (202) 333-9221 www.tvturnoff.org

SCREEN FREE WEEK ACTIVITY IDEAS

Check off activities as you complete them or fill in your own.

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Walked the Dog

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Played Frisbee with Friends

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Played a Board Game with my Family

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Read a Book

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Learned a Trick on my Skateboard

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Went for a Walk with my Family

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Helped Cook Dinner

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Went to the Park

☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

SCREEN FREE WEEK ACTIVITY IDEAS

Check off activities as you complete them or fill in your own.

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Learned a New Dance ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Went to a Museum ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Went to the Library ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Painted a Picture ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Played Soccer ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Learned a New Card Game ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Went for a Bike Ride ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

Learned to Play Guitar ☐

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Instead of watching TV or playing video games, I

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Fact Sheet

The American Academy of Pediatrics says:

- Children age 2 and under *should **not** watch any television.*
- Older children should keep television time, including movies and video games, to *less than 2 hours a day.*

Why reduce TV time?

Early childhood is an important time for children to learn and develop the skills they need to grow up healthy!

- Children age 2 and under should not watch any television. During a child's first 2 years critical brain development is occurring. TV can get in the way of exploring, learning, and spending time interacting with parents and others. This is an important time for young children to develop the skills they need to grow!

Children need a lot of physical activity every day to be healthy and happy!

- Children who are physically active are less likely to be overweight, are sick less often, do better in school, sleep better, and are less likely to feel sad, depressed, or stressed.
- Most children watch more than 20 to 30 hours of television every week, or about 3 to 4 hours a day! Time spent watching TV or using the computer is time they could be playing, riding a bike, or having fun with family or friends. Even quiet play like board games or reading is more active than watching TV.
- Being physically active outside of school is more important than ever. Only one in four children has a physical education class at school every day!
- The more time a child spends watching TV, the greater the chance he or she has of becoming overweight. Overweight children face many health problems, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, respiratory (breathing) problems, trouble sleeping, and depression.

Children often eat unhealthy food when watching TV!

- Children often snack on high calorie, high fat, and/or salty foods when watching TV.
- Children eat less healthy meals when eating in front of the TV.

Television advertising impacts children's food choices!

- The average child sees more than 40,000 commercials each year! Most ads targeted at children are for candy, cereal, and fast food.
- Food ads children see on TV can pressure them to choose unhealthy foods to eat. Even watching 10 to 30 seconds of food commercials can affect what a child wants to eat!
- Children who go grocery shopping with their families often ask for unhealthy foods they see in TV ads. The more TV they watch, the more likely they are to ask for these foods.
- Popular TV and movie characters encourage kids to buy and eat unhealthy foods.
- Children as young as 14 months of age will imitate what they see on TV.

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www.metrokc.gov/health/reduceTV

Special Thanks to Alberta Sport, Recreation, Park & Wildlife Foundation

How Much TV?

How much TV do your children *REALLY* watch? Think about your family's TV viewing habits. For each of the following questions, **circle** one answer which best fits your family.

1. Does your child have a TV in his or her own room?
A) Yes B) Sometimes C) No

2. Does your child watch more than 1 to 2 hours of TV per day?
A) Always B) Sometimes C) Never

3. Do you have the TV on during meals?
A) Always B) Sometimes C) Never

4. Do you talk with your child about what he or she watches on TV?
A) Never B) Sometimes C) Always

5. Do you set limits on the amount of TV your child watches?
A) No B) Sometimes C) Yes

6. Is your family TV on for more than 2 hours a day?
A) Yes B) Sometimes C) No

Add up the number of **A, B,** and **Cs** you chose.
- for each **A** give yourself 3 points
- for each **B** 2 points
- for each **C** 1 point

What is your total score? **Total score**

Flip card to see how well you did!

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King County Overweight Prevention Initiative

www.metrokc.gov/health/reduceTV

The Live Outside the Box Challenge

Choose any week and challenge yourself and your family to go "TV FREE." That's right, no TV for one full week!

Using the log sheet, each day either write or draw the activities that you choose to do instead of watching TV. Record how much time you spend watching TV. You'll be surprised at how many things you can do and how much fun you can have when you are not watching TV!

Use this log to keep track, and good luck!

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
TV:	TV:	TV:	TV:	TV:	TV:	TV:

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Erase and Reuse!

Check out www.tvturnoff.org for fun ideas and support for you and your family during TV Turnoff week!

*Adapted from Live Outside the Box

King County Overweight Prevention Initiative

www.metrokc.gov/health/reduceTV

If your score is between 6 and 8

Congratulations! You are doing a great job of keeping your kids healthy by monitoring the type and amount of TV they watch. Check out the list of 50 Alternatives to TV for more ideas!

If your score is between 9 and 12

Good job. You are doing a good job of keeping your kids healthy by monitoring the type and amount of TV they watch. However, there is more you can do! Check out the Strategies for Reducing TV, and try some you think might work for your family.

If your score is 13 and above

Your kids might be watching too much TV, which can be unhealthy for them. Check out the Strategies for Reducing TV, and try some you think might work for your family. Try some of the 50 Alternatives to TV for fun and healthy ideas your kids can do!

The American Academy of Pediatrics says:

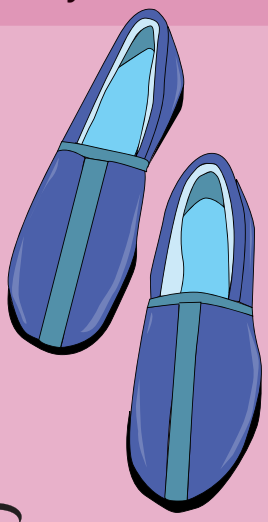
- Children age 2 and under *should **not** watch any television*.
- Older children should keep television time, including movies and video games, to *less than 2 hours a day.*

*Adapted from MediaWise

Alternatives to Watching Television

50 Ways to Live Outside the Box!

Turning off the television means more time for kids to be active!



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25 Indoor Activities

1. Act out a story
2. Build a fort out of pillows and blankets
3. Have a carpet picnic
4. Play a card game
5. Play a board game
6. Invent a new game and teach it to a friend
7. Play flashlight tag at night
8. Make shadow puppets on the wall
9. Play charades
10. Read a book
11. Dance to your favorite music
12. Color or paint pictures
13. Do Show and Tell with your friends or family
14. Work on a puzzle
15. Play dress-up
16. Have story-time. Either read a story aloud or make up your own story to tell!
17. Sing songs
18. Do an art project
19. Cook dinner together
20. Make a fruit smoothie together
21. Play indoor basketball
22. Play Twister
23. Build an indoor obstacle course
24. Blow up a beach ball and keep bouncing it in the air as long as possible
25. Holiday coming up? Make cards or decorations for it. If not a holiday, make one up!

Family Activities

4 Simple Ideas!

1. Indoor Basketball

Who says you can't play basketball indoors? You'll need: a wastebasket, lots of paper (can be old paper or newspapers), and masking tape (optional).

Use the masking tape to make lines on the floor which mark certain distances from the wastebasket. You can also use other paper or clothes to create a line. Scrunch up the paper for balls. Now it is time to start shooting baskets! Begin at the closest line (the easiest) and try to make a basket by throwing the paper ball into the wastebasket. Work farther back to more difficult lines as you get better at making baskets.

2. Walking Scavenger Hunt

Want to make a fun game out of walking around the block with your kids? You don't need anything except your imagination!

Kids love scavenger hunts! As you leave the house for your family walk around the block, give your children a list of things to find. Each scavenger hunt can have different themes, such as "Color" where kids look for a green car, a blue flower, a red door, a black cat, and a white fence. Or try "Size" and look for a big cat and a small cat, a big car and a small car, and a big person and a little person. Have your children think of different themes and things to look for!

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Alternatives to Watching Television

50 Ways to Live Outside the Box!

Turning off the television means more time for kids to be active!

25 Outdoor Activities

1. Walk to the library and get a book
2. Have a picnic
3. Jump rope
4. Walk around the block with friends
5. Watch the sunset with your family
6. Play Frisbee
7. Fly a kite
8. Organize a scavenger hunt
9. Play basketball with a friend
10. Build an obstacle course
11. Play flag football
12. Do 50 jumping jacks
13. Skip
14. Go skateboarding
15. Play catch with friends
16. Play hopscotch
17. Blow bubbles
18. Draw pictures with sidewalk chalk
19. Play follow the leader
20. Play tag
21. Go to the park
22. Use sidewalk chalk to draw different Hopscotch shapes and JUMP!
23. Play Red Light Green Light
24. Play Simon Says
25. Play Duck Duck Goose

Some of these activities can be done inside, too! On rainy days try numbers 23 to 25 in an open space in your home!

Family Activities

4 Simple Ideas!

3. Obstacle Course

This can be indoor or outdoor fun! You can use normal household items to make an obstacle course, such as chairs, pillows, stuffed animals and pots and pans. Set up an obstacle course around your house using any items you choose. Have rules for each item, such as “hop on one foot around the chair” or “walk backwards 6 steps with the pillow balanced on your head” or “play a song using a spoon and a pot.” Have your children think of different challenges they could do at each obstacle.

4. Make and Play With Play Dough

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
2 cups water
2 tablespoons oil
4 teaspoons cream of tartar
Can add drops of food coloring if colors are desired

Combine all ingredients in a large pot. Heat the ingredients on the stove top for 3 to 4 minutes at medium heat, stirring constantly. The ingredients will start to dry up, and form a ball. Remove from heat and knead the dough for a minute or so. To keep it from becoming dry, store the play dough in a zip-lock bag or container. If it starts to dry out, a little water can be added and kneaded into the play dough.

Quick & Easy Fried Rice

Makes 6 Servings

1. In a large pan, heat oil on medium-high heat. Add onions and rice. Stir and cook until onions are soft, about 5 minutes.
2. Reduce heat to medium; add vegetables and meat to rice mixture. Cook 2 minutes for frozen vegetables and 5-7 minutes for fresh.
3. Spread the mixture out to the sides of the pan, leaving space in the middle for the eggs. Add the eggs and scramble until cooked.
4. Mix the eggs with the rice and vegetables, and then sprinkle with soy sauce.

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Options:

Use a cooked grain other than rice, such as bulgar wheat, millet or couscous.

Instead of soy sauce, use salsa.

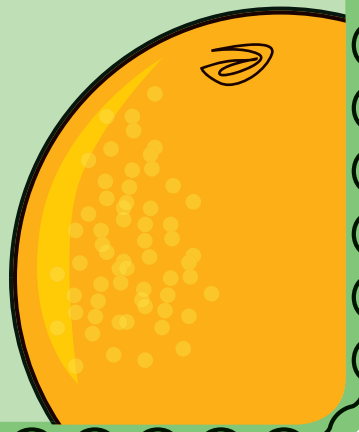
Instead of 2 eggs, use 1/2 cup firm, crumbled tofu.

Recipes for Children and Families to do Together!

Very Berry Smoothie

Makes 4 servings

2 cups apple or orange juice
1 cup low or non-fat vanilla yogurt
2 small (or 1 large) ripe bananas
1 cup frozen berries (blackberries, raspberries or strawberries)



Quesadillas

Makes 10 Quesadillas

1. Preheat oven to 350º.
2. Sprinkle about 2 tablespoons of cheese on half of each tortilla.
3. Top cheese with about 2 teaspoons of salsa.
4. Fold each tortilla in half and fasten with toothpick. Place in baking dish and bake in 350° oven for 5 minutes or until cheese melts.

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Options:

Layer thinly sliced tart apples and grated cheese.

Bake until cheese melts.

Add jalapeño peppers before heating.

Add fresh grated vegetables.

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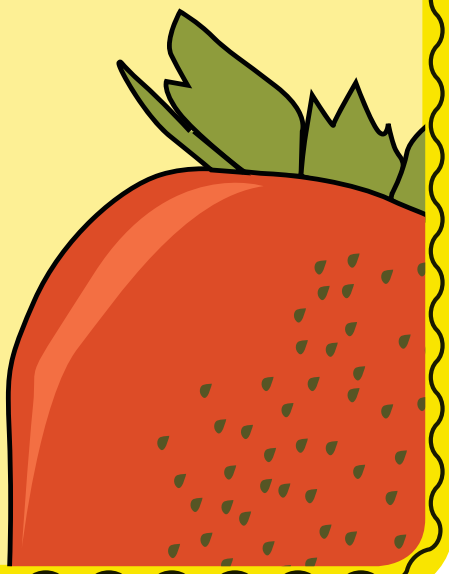
Recipes for Children and Families to do Together!

Fruit Parfait

Makes 4 Parfaits

1 cup apples, chopped
1 cup strawberries, sliced
1 banana, sliced
1 cup vanilla lowfat yogurt
1 cup lowfat granola
1/2 cup raisins



Very Berry Smoothie

Makes 4 Servings

1. Place all ingredients in a blender.
2. Blend for about 20 seconds or until all ingredients are smooth.

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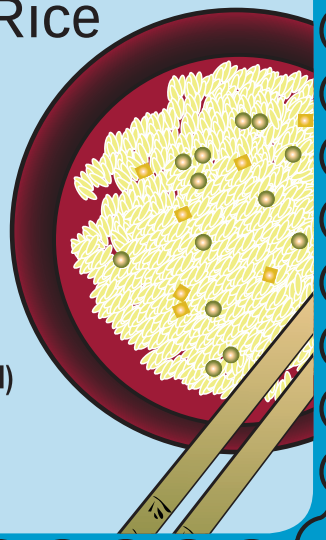
Recipes for Children and Families to do Together!

Quick & Easy Fried Rice

Makes 6 Servings



2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1 small onion, finely chopped
3 cups cooked brown or white rice
1—10 oz. package frozen mixed vegetables or 2 cups fresh vegetables, chopped
1 cup cooked poultry, fish or meat (optional)
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon soy sauce

Fruit Parfait

Makes 4 Parfaits

Using a clear glass, layer ingredients starting with a layer of one fruit, then a layer of another fruit, then the yogurt, then some granola, then another fruit, and top with raisins. Be creative and layer it the way you like.

Variations:

Use any of the following fruits in place of the ones called for in the recipe: kiwi, orange, pear, pineapple, grapes, other berries, apricot, nectarine, peach, plum.

Change the flavor of yogurt for a change in taste: raspberry, lemon, peach, plain.

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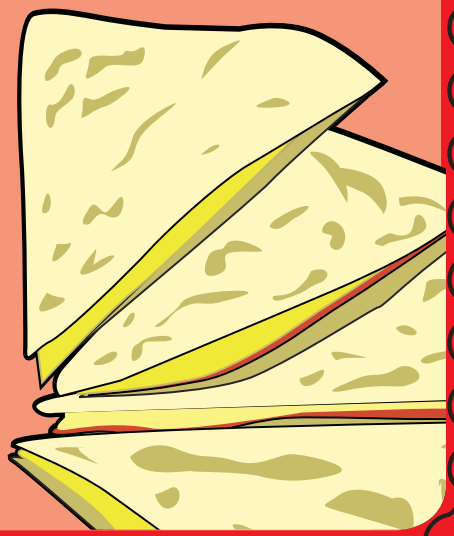
Recipes for Children and Families to do Together!

Quesadillas

Makes 10 Quesadillas



8 oz. cheddar *or* jack cheese, grated
10 corn or flour tortillas
Salsa or hot sauce

Strategies to Reduce Television Viewing in Your Home

Remember, the American Academy of Pediatrics says:

- Children age 2 and under *should **not** watch any television*.
- Older children should keep television time, including movies and video games, to *less than 2 hours a day*.

SET LIMITS

- Set TV limits for your children. Allow them 2 hours or less of quality television a day.
- At the beginning of the week, give them the TV Guide and together pick out the specific programs they want to watch that week – no more than 2 hours of television, including movies and video games, each day.
- Make certain days of the week "TV-free" days. Try no TV on school nights or no TV on Tuesdays.
- Rather than let your children just "watch TV," ask them specifically what program they will be watching. When the TV show is over encourage them to do something else.
- Have your children complete their homework and chores before watching TV.
- Explain your rules in simple, concrete, and positive words. Instead of saying "You can't watch TV," try "Let's turn off the TV so we can…"
- You don't have to stop watching TV all at once. Try watching a little less each day.

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JUST TURN THE TV OFF

- Turn TV off during meals. Meals are a great time for conversation.
- Instead of TV, listen to your favorite music or the radio.

WHAT IF YOUR KIDS SAY THEY ARE BORED?

- Don't worry if your children say "I'm bored!" For children, being bored often leads to creativity. It may take a little while, but they will find ways to entertain themselves!
- When your children say they are bored: Start an "*Idea Box*" full of different activities your family can do instead of watch TV. Have your children decorate the box, and whenever you think of a good idea write it on a slip of paper and place it in the box. Whenever your children say they are bored, send them running to the box for a new activity. Put both family activities and activities your children can do on their own.
- Make a box of "*Fun Questions*" and choose one for the entire family to answer at each mealtime. For example, "If I could be any animal, what animal would I be and why?"

PUT THE TV WHERE YOU HAVE CONTROL OVER IT

- DO NOT HAVE A TV IN YOUR CHILD'S BEDROOM. This is the most important thing you can do. Even if your child has a TV in the bedroom now, you can remove it! It is hard to monitor what TV or how much TV your child is watching. It keeps kids away from family activities and distracts them from homework, thinking, reading, and sleeping.
- Move the TV away from the family room. TV is less tempting when it is not in the main family room.

SHOW YOUR CHILDREN HOW FUN LIVING OUTSIDE THE BOX IS!

- Instead of using the TV as a babysitter, try encouraging your kids to do other activities on their own. Think about how careful you are when you choose someone to baby-sit your children—watching too much TV can be dangerous for your kids.
- Try to watch TV *with* your children and to talk with them about what you are watching. You are showing that you care about them and about what they watch.
- Set an example for your kids. Let them see YOU turn off the TV. Then invite them to join you in some activity!
- Don't let TV take away time from what is important: time for family to talk with each other, play together, read together, or to think and imagine about the world.

King County Overweight Prevention Initiative www.metrokc.gov/health/reduceTV

Lesson 8

Prime-Time Smartness

Background

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, 26% of all children watched over four hours of TV a day. Essentially, TV watching for many children has become a full-time job! On average, youth spend more time watching television each year than they spend in school. This tendency toward an inactive or sedentary lifestyle is a contributing factor to youths' being overweight. The more television a child watches, the more likely he or she will be overweight. The increase in television viewing has also been associated with elevated cholesterol levels and poor cardiovascular fitness in youth. Young people should be encouraged to consider healthy alternatives to television viewing, particularly choices that involve more physical activity.

Estimated Teaching Time and Related Subject Areas

Estimated teaching time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Related subject areas: reading, math

Objectives

1. Students will identify a television program(s) they will not view in order to participate in an alternative activity.
2. Students will create a list of alternative activities to consider in place of watching television.

Materials

1. Envelopes containing "Dear Student" letter and "Pledge"—one per student
2. Small white envelopes for signed copy of the pledge—one per student
3. Worksheet #1, "My Favorite Prime-Time Shows"
4. Packet of "Prime-Time Smartness Challenge" materials (one for each student who wants to take the challenge):
   "Hello Again"
   "The Star Page"
   "The Questions Page"
5. Certificate of Congratulations for students who take the challenge
6. *Freeze My TV* program summary

Procedure

Part I: Motivation

1. Begin by telling class that the office has delivered special letters addressed to "Students Only." The teacher should also receive a letter marked "Teacher Only." (Pass out a letter to each child, with address similar to following example.)

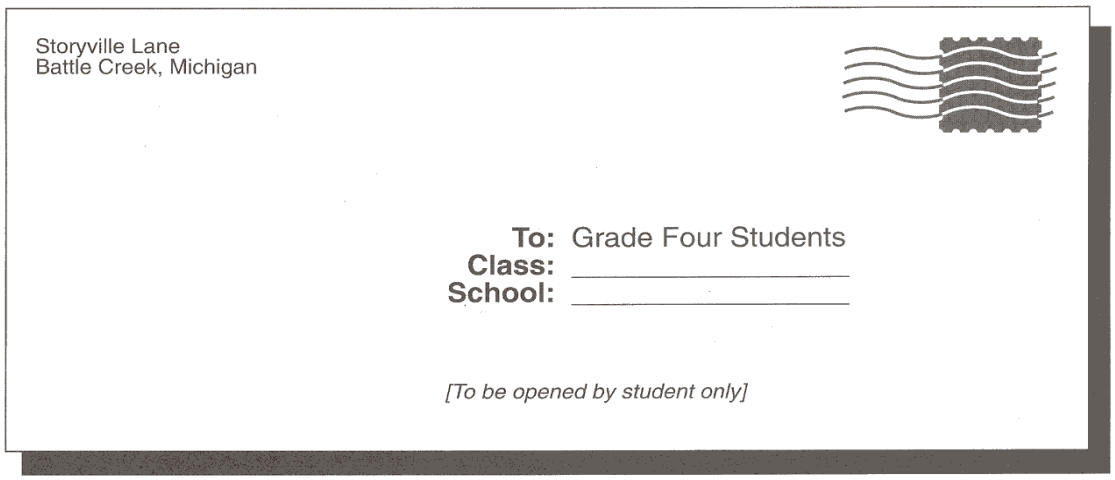

Figure 8.1 "Students Only" address example.

Option: If your school can afford the expense (approximately $10.00 total for postage), have the letters mailed to each student in the class.

2. Provide time for the class to open the letters and read the pages quietly. Encourage students who need assistance to work in pairs.
3. Pretend to open the "teacher only" letter, then tell students that they have been asked to create a list of things that could be done at home in "prime-time" hours. (Write the words "prime time" on the board.)

Part II: Development

1. Ask students to tell the meaning of "prime time" as it relates to television viewing. (Note: Prime time refers to the period of the day during which most programs on television record their highest viewing audience.)
2. Have students identify some favorite shows that they watch between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.
3. Conduct a class poll to determine the class's favorite shows: first choice, second choice, and third choice.

Program	Show #1	Show #2	Show #3
A. The Simpsons	18	15	1
B. Pokémon	10	14	10
C. Batman	6	5	23

Figure 8.2 Sample: students identify favorite shows (first, second, and third choice).

4. Ask students to study the chart to determine which program would probably be easiest for the class to "pass up." (In the example above, Batman was chosen as a third choice by more students, so it would probably be the easiest not to watch.)

5. Ask students to think of activities in which they could participate when not watching television. (As the list is brainstormed, record answers on the board. List at least 7 to 10 activities.)

   Sample alternatives to TV: Read a book, write a poem, play a game with brother/sister, help a little brother/sister, play basketball, dance, walk to the store, help with chores.

Part III: Application

1. Have students review and discuss the list to determine if activities are safe (not dangerous) to do.
2. Guide students in reviewing the list again to determine which activities involve the greatest level of physical activity.
3. Guide them in coding the list as follows:

   (+) = some physical activity (e.g., dancing, stretching, playing ball)

   (–) = very little physical activity (e.g., reading, playing a board game)

   Have students cite the benefits of choosing activities that involve physical activity.

   Sample Benefits:

   - Exercises the muscles.
   - Exercises the heart.
4. Distribute "My Favorite Prime-Time Shows." Have students write in their three favorite television programs for each day. Ask them to circle one for each day that they would agree to pass up if they were to take "The Prime-Time Smartness Challenge" (see extension).

Part IV: Summary and Extension

1. Explain the "Prime-Time Smartness Challenge" to students. Record names of students who agree to participate. Distribute packet of materials.

   The Challenge does not have to be limited to students who watch TV. If a student does not watch any TV, he or she can still participate in the daily activities of the Challenge. Where appropriate, instead of substituting for television time, the student may substitute physically active time for physically inactive time. For example, instead of sitting and listening to music, the student could dance to the music.
2. Create a bulletin board titled "Winner's Circle." Display pictures of students who participate in the "Prime-Time Challenge." Add the "Certificates of Congratulations" of those students who return their materials to the teacher.
3. Make a bar graph with the class to show the numbers of students who give up 30 minutes of television each day for the week. Each morning, have one of the students fill in the bar for the previous day.
4. Make a pie chart of an average day (24 hours). Have the students estimate and display the number of hours each day they do the following activities:

Sleep	Do homework
Eat	Bathe/dress/brush teeth, etc.
Spend in school	Other activities
Play	
5. Explain the *Freeze My TV* promotion to students (summary provided; also see lesson 25). Tell them it will be another TV-related activity they will participate in.

Dear Student:

How would you like to be smarter in just 5 days? Yes, that's right! You can be smarter than you are now in just 5 (five) days!

I know you are smart now, but you can become even smarter. I know the secret and I will share it with you, if you promise not to give up after the first or second day. I will prove to you that you can be smarter if you follow my instructions for five days.

"WHAT'S THE SECRET?" you ask.

It's so simple, you can easily do it.

Yes . . . you, you, you!

Oh, I almost forgot to tell you . . . In order to be smarter in 5 days, you MUST believe in yourself. What good is being smarter if you don't believe *you are smart already?*

What I'm offering you is a chance to be smarter than you are right now. Being smart usually takes a long time, but my method will take only 5 days!!!

First, I must be honest and tell you that you must sign the pledge on the next page to prove that you are really brave enough to succeed. After signing the pledge, fold the page and put it in an envelope. Then give it to me in exchange for the Prime-Time Smartness Challenge Materials.

DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE READ THIS PAGE CAREFULLY!


Pledge
I promise to give up
30 minutes of
television each day
to become smarter
in 5 days
Prize
Date: _____
Signature: _____
Class: _____

Worksheet 1

My Favorite Prime-Time Shows

Directions

Write the names of three of your favorite television shows on the lines below each day of the week.

Monday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Tuesday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Wednesday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thursday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Friday

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name _____

Class _____

Prime-Time Smartness Challenge Materials

Hello Again!
Did you follow the instructions? Great! Now you will begin the real test. Are you ready to follow the steps below? Good luck! See you in the winner's circle!!

Step 1

List the names of the shows (one each day) that you agree to give up to become smarter. Look at "My Favorite Prime-Time Shows" if you don't remember which ones you chose.

Step 2

Here comes the real secret. Are you ready? Turn the page to **The Star Page**. On that page there is a passage for you to read. Please look it over, then go on to Step 3.

Step 3

Now that you have seen **The Star Page**, here's what you do. . . . Each day, instead of watching one of your favorite television programs, you agree to read **The Star Page** three times, then do some other activity. You must read each word. If you skip a word, start over. Remember, read this page instead of watching one of your favorite shows.

Step 4

Keep track of your success on the "Prime-Time Smartness Challenge" page. Return it and **The Questions Page** to your teacher after the week is over.

IS GIVING UP 30 MINUTES OF TELEVISION TOO MUCH TO ASK TO GET SMARTER?

The Star Page

ECHIDNAS (E-KID-NAS)

Echidnas are egg-laying mammals. The female deposits a single egg in her pouch while lying on her back. The egg hatches about ten days later, but a young echidna stays in its mother's pouch and feeds from milk "patches" until its spines begin to develop. An echidna's spines are its protection. If threatened, the animal curls up in a ball, offering a mouthful of sharp spines to other animal attackers. On soft soil, it will use its long foreclaws to bury itself and escape heat and disturbances. The echidna has short legs, but they are very powerful. The animal can dig a hole rapidly in soft or hard ground.

Prime-Time Smartness Challenge

Put a check in the box next to each day that you succeed in following your pledge:

- ☐ **Day 1:** I gave up watching _____. Instead, I read The Star Page three times. For the rest of the 30 minutes I _____ _____. (Ideas: played a game, danced to music, drew, helped a family member with something he or she was doing.)
- ☐ **Day 2:** I gave up watching _____. I read The Star Page three times, then I _____ for the rest of the 30 minutes.
- ☐ **Day 3:** I'm halfway there—I know I can make it! I gave up watching _____ _____. After I read The Star Page three times, I _____.
- ☐ **Day 4:** I'm getting smarter—I can feel it. I gave up watching _____ _____. I read The Star Page three times, then I _____.
- ☐ **Day 5:** I gave up watching _____. Instead, I did my best to fill out The Questions Page. Now I am finished with the Prime-Time Smartness Challenge!

? The Questions Page ?

(Save for Day 5)

1. By now, you have learned many facts about echidnas. Please list four (or more if you can)! *(Tonight, go to someone in your home and tell him or her one interesting fact that you have learned).*

   1. _____

   2. _____

   3. _____

   4. _____

2. If someone said that an echidna would make a great pet, would you agree? (Why or why not?) Write a short paragraph explaining your answer.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU'RE A WINNER!

Student's Name

Do you feel smarter? Did you know about echidnas before you started this assignment? Think of all you've learned!

You can give up TV for 30 minutes each day!

Keep up the good work!

Freeze My TV Summary

Freeze My TV, an extension activity to lesson 8 (Prime-Time Smartness), challenges students to keep track of and limit the amount of time they spend watching television in a designated week.

For each day of an entire seven-day week, students will log the number of hours they spend viewing television, watching videotapes, and playing video games. By keeping track of their own viewing habits, students can then see how they compare to other youth their age as well as to the *American Academy of Pediatrics'* recommended goal of watching no more than two hours of television per day.

In addition to logging television-viewing time, other contest activities include graphing, chart development, and journal writing.

Objectives

1. To have fourth- and fifth-grade students keep track of the time they spend watching television for a week, and to use this information and experience to develop graphs and write journal entries.
2. To have fourth- and fifth-grade students try to limit the time they spend viewing television to no more than two hours each day.
3. To have students think of alternative ways (especially physically active ways) they could spend their time other than watching television. Examples include playing a game, doing a puzzle, reading, talking with friends, singing and dancing to music, helping with chores, moving around, or writing songs or poems.

Materials

Materials for the *Freeze My TV* promotion are included in lesson 25.

How to Promote Your Own Screen-Free Week

Parent Outreach

The first and most important group to reach out to is parents of children who are potential participants in Screen-Free Week. You'll want to explain what Screen-Free Week is, and why screen-free time is so important. If you're a teacher, school librarian, or an administrator, you'll want to send out a permission slip for parents to return. We've included a sample parent letter at the end of this section for you to reproduce; the letter is also available online as a Word document at www.commercialfreechildhood.org/screenfreeweek/downloads.htm so you can easily edit the letter to fit your needs.

School Newsletters

If your Screen-Free Week is school-based, you'll definitely want to include information about the week in your newsletter. Many libraries have newsletters as well. Newsletter articles are a great way to remind parents about Screen-Free Week, suggest and promote screen-free activities, and find volunteers to help you plan and execute events during the week.

Social Networks

Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter are great places to promote Screen-Free Week. You can use social networks to let others know that you're going screen-free, share strategies and tips for reducing screen time, and plan events during the week. (You'll want to be sure to do all your Facebooking and Tweeting prior to the start of the week since you'll be going screen-free from April 18-24).

Here are some suggestions for using Facebook to promote Screen-Free Week.

- **Become a fan of national Screen-Free Week on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pages/Screen-Free-Week/131838476871942. Here you can communicate with Screen-Free Week staff as well as other Screen-Free Week organizers. Share your plans for Screen-Free Week and learn what others around the country are doing.**
- **Create your own fan page for your Screen-Free Week (feel free to use or adapt our logo), and use it to organize events and activities and get others involved. Encourage parents, colleagues and other potential participants to "like" your page and become fans. Enlist others to help you spread the word by inviting them to be co-administrators of the page.**
- **If you're holding special events during the week (e.g. a treasure hunt, a read-a-thon at the library), create an event page for each one. Be sure to invite your Facebook friends and post the event links on your Screen-Free Week fan page. Ask your fans to RSVP and "share" the events with their friends.**
- **Create a Facebook group and invite other Screen-Free Week organizers and participants in your area to join so you can trade ideas and coordinate activities on a local level.**

If you're on Twitter, let your followers know that you're going Screen-Free. You may want to use the hashtag #screenfreeweek so other Screen-Free Week organizers can follow your tweets

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor of your local newspaper are a great way to raise awareness about Screen-Free Week. Most large, metropolitan-area newspapers generally only print letters that relate to a recent story that the paper has run, so try to link your letter to a current event. Your letter about Screen-Free Week could be in response to a story about children and the media, obesity, or getting kids out in nature. ("Your recent story highlighting the childhood obesity epidemic makes clear that kids today spend too much time watching television and playing video games. That's why the students at Jonesville Elementary School will be celebrating Screen-Free Week...")

All letters should be brief (less than 250 words) and include your name, address, and phone number and any relevant affiliations. Students writing a letter to the editor may wish to put their age or grade.

Press Release and Follow-up

The best way to generate media coverage of your Screen-Free Week is by drafting a press release and sending it to local media outlets by fax or email. News stories about the week are most likely to run on Monday or Tuesday of Screen-Free Week, so you'll want to make sure to draft and distribute your press release well in advance. We have included a sample press release at the end of this section. It is also available online as a Word document at www.commercialfreechildhood.org/screenfreeweek/downloads.htm so you can easily edit it to fit your needs.

You'll want to give your press release a strong title that makes clear what your release is about. (For example, "Jonesville students going screen-free to reclaim leisure time, boost physical activity.") In addition, your press release should answer the following questions:

- **Who is promoting Screen-Free Week in the community?**
- **What is Screen-Free Week?**
- **Why is it important to go Screen-Free?**
- **When does Screen-Free Week take place?**
- **Where is Screen-Free Week taking place (libraries, schools, etc. . .)?**

Your release should include a phone number and the name of the contact person whom reporters may call for more information.

Send the press release to both the assignment desks and metro news editors of local newspapers and radio stations. Make follow-up phone calls to recipients of the release to encourage them to cover the story. When pitching your story to members of the media, it's helpful to keep the following in mind:

- **Let the reporter know the purpose of your call. Do you want the reporter to write a story? Meet with you? Attend an event during Screen-Free Week?**
- **Be concise. Make your pitch clearly in no more than three sentences.**
- **Be prepared and helpful. Offer to send the fact sheet on screen time and children and other resources from your Organizer's Kit. If there are experts on children or media working with you, offer to put the reporter in touch with them. If there are schoolchildren who are willing – and have their parents permission – to talk to the media, let the reporter know that as well.**

• Be honest. If you're asked something you aren't sure of, don't guess. Instead, refer the person to the Screen-Free Week website (www.screenfree.org) or suggest he or she call the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood at (617) 896-9368.

Preparing for the Week: Preschool and Early Elementary School

When our friend Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin, founder of Empowered by Play, was K-1 teacher, she organized Screen-Free Week every year. Here are her suggestions for getting kids excited about the week.

Start by brainstorming with kids what they can do instead of watching TV or playing video games or on the computer. Write down the suggestions.

- **Ask each child to write or draw about one screen-free activity.**
- **Make a class book of the pictures to share with other classes.**
- **Hang a big list of screen-free activities outside your classroom.**

The pledge cards (see page 44 of the Organizer's Kit) are a great way to get younger kids excited about the week.

Read aloud the book *Fix-It*, by David McPhail. It's about a family of bears whose TV breaks.

Read *Gilberto and the Wind* by Marie Hall Ets. It is full of outdoor imaginative play ideas and can help kids who are really plugged in to see the fun of going outside.

At school assemblies, have teachers perform skits, sing songs (e.g. "Instead of Watching my TV" by Brady Rymer), or read poems (e.g. Shel Silverstein's "Jimmy Jet and His TV Set") about turning off screens.

Before Screen-Free Week begins, have a family game night at school to help families get excited about playing games during the Week.

Send home newsletters to parents with a countdown to Screen-Free Week. Include suggestions for things they can do at home and ideas for local activities families can participate in.

Let children know you'll be celebrating with a party and/or assembly after Screen-Free Week is over!

"Prime Time" Media Literacy Activities for Older Elementary School Students

Alexis Ladd, from Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (www.truceteachers.org) teaches media literacy. She's shared these suggestions for helping kids get ready for Screen-Free Week.

Before the big week arrives, spend some time with your elementary school-age children, or students, to help them learn more about who's behind what's on the screens they watch. These activities can lead to engaging and important discussions with your kids. Please feel free to modify these ideas and let us know what worked for you.

LESSON 1: Is it a Need or a Want?

Make a quick list of the things that you need to survive. Now, make a list of the things that you want. Write down a few ideas about how you first found out about the items on your "want" list.

Over one day, count how many ads you see on the screens that you're watching. How many of these ads are trying to get you to buy things that you really need?

Have a chat:

- **Why is it that after you see some advertisements, you start wanting whatever is being sold? Maybe it took a few times seeing the same ad, or maybe your friends started talking about it, but what was it that got all of you interested in the first place?**
- **Of the commercials that you see every day, how many of them are trying to get you to buy things that you really need?**
- **Which ads are better at grabbing your attention? What are the people who made those ads doing to get you to buy their product?**

"Languages of persuasion" are ways that ads get you to want to buy what is being sold in advertisements. You can read more about them with your parents at www.nmmlp.org/media_literacy/language_persuasion.html. Try and make up a few of your own languages of persuasion.

Vocabulary words:

Needs: Items necessary for survival.
Wants: Items that may make your life easier, but you can live without.

LESSON 2: Be a Detective

You've been asked to solve the mystery of how many ads are hidden inside television programs and computer games. The next time you're watching a TV show, or playing a game on the computer, watch carefully. Are there products with labels facing the camera? Are the actresses and actors using products or eating things in a way that directs you to notice what they are? Count how many hidden ads there are inside the program or game and talk about what you noticed.

LESSON 3: What Happens to All the Stuff We Don't Want Anymore?

Have you ever bought something that you really wanted and then were disappointed when you got it home? Write a story or draw a picture that tells what happened. Was the item different from what you saw in the ad, or did it break quickly? What do you think happens to all the stuff that people don't want anymore?

Do some research to find out what happens to all of that trash. You can start by watching Annie Leonard's "The Story of Stuff" at www.storyofstuff.com. Check out her stories about bottled water and other things, too. Take a field trip to your local dump or transfer station. You can learn a lot about what people throw away and what happens to it. Write a story or draw a picture that tells how all the stuff that people don't want any more is affecting the environment.

Vocabulary words

Environment: Our natural surroundings, which affect how people, plants and animals live.
Sustainability: Living within natural limitations; not using things up before they have time to replenish themselves.

"Prime Time" Media Literacy Activities for Middle Schoolers

Alexis Ladd, a media literacy specialist from Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (TRUCE), suggests these activities for older kids. Before Screen-Free Week arrives, spend some time with your students to learn more about who's behind the screen. We hope that these activities will lead you to interesting discussions with your kids. Please feel free to modify these ideas and let us know what worked for you.

LESSON 1: Be a Message Detective

You have just been assigned a special case. You have to figure out: what are the messages behind some of the ads that you're seeing? Sometimes they're really obvious, and other times they're not.

Pick an advertisement. It may be easier to start with one that is on the computer and doesn't go by as quickly as an ad on television. Often times ads are posted on YouTube if you're looking for one in particular.

Answer the following questions to deconstruct the ad (modified from The New Mexico Media Literacy Project):

1. Who paid for it and why?

2. Who is being targeted? (Specifically look to see if and how the following groups are targeted – age, ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status/class, and gender.)

3. Note what you're seeing and hearing – the images, dialogue, music, etc. Now explain what messages are being presented. (For example, how are the women and the men presented? What is the ad trying to get us to believe? What values are being expressed?)

4. What tools of persuasion are being used to attract your attention? (Go to www.nmmlp.org/media_literacy/language_persuasion.html for a complete list of tools of persuasion.)

5. How is this a healthy or unhealthy media example? Why?

6. What stories are not being told? (Consider the environmental impact of what is being sold; are any stereotypes reinforced?)

Once you deconstruct several ads, start applying these questions to television programs, music videos, video games, and other programming. What trends are you finding?

Vocabulary words:

Stereotype: When assumptions are applied to people, often based on oversimplified opinions, which can be used by a dominant group to maintain power.

Values: Beliefs that provide direction to live by.

LESSON 2: Datahead

Take a minute or two to estimate and then write down how many hours you spend in front of a screen and how many ads you see in one day. Then, over one, two, or three days, count how many advertisements you actually see during your screen time. You can be creative and come up with your own tracking system using our example below, or you can use the blank Ad Tracking chart in this section. Leave a copy next to the screens that aren't portable and carry one with you for the rest of them. Don't forget to monitor the number of hours of screen time you spent during each day.

Total the number of hours you were in front of a screen and then total the number of minutes for the length of the ads. You'll need to convert your hours into minutes or vice versa. Now calculate the percentage of time you spent looking at ads by dividing the advertising time by the screen time.

Have a chat:

- **What did you discover?**
- **What did you notice about how many commercials are shown during a 30-minute television program and a one hour program?**
- **Where did you see the most ads?**
- **Where did you find ads that you didn't expect to see them?**
- **What did the ads do to get your attention?**

Vocabulary words:

Fill: The programming used to keep people watching television that is placed in between the commercials.

Product placement: When products are put into the set and/or included in the script so viewers see the characters or avatars using them and/or talking about them. This applies to all screen programming, from television to video games. Companies usually pay for their products to be featured.

AD TRACKING

Name		Date	
What kind of ad?	**What was it for?**	**Where did you see it?**	**How long was it?**
TV Commercial	Shampoo	Glee	30 sec.
Facebook Ad	Clothes	MY Facebook Page	2 minutes
		Total Ad Time	
		Total Screen Time	

LESSON 3: What's Your Reality?

Take a moment to write down your own reality. What are the things in your life that are important to you? What makes you happy and why? What do you think will be important to you in a few years? What's important to your friends? Now compare your thoughts to "reality" television programming. Are there any similarities?

Read the following article and discuss the different perspectives. You may want to "chunk" the reading depending on reading levels, focusing on different sections over a few weeks.

www.realitybitesbackbook.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/CQResearcher_RealityTV.pdf

Reality Bites Back is a book written by Jennifer Posner that focuses on reality TV. Here's a fun way to analyze reality TV that Jennifer created using a Mad Lib format. You can also submit your version to her website at www.RealityBitesBackBook.com if you want to share it with others.

Here's how:

1. Record your favorite reality show.

2. Transcribe a particularly outrageous, regressive, offensive, or amusing monologue, outburst, argument, or conversation, making very sure that your transcript is word-for-word accurate.

3. Remove key parts of speech, leave blank spots, and label them with the parts of speech required to fill in the blank.

4. Have a family member complete the Mad Lib and compare the transcript with your own. Are they far off ? Discuss the content of the original script. What stereotypes, if any, are presented?

5. If you want to share your Mad Lib with others, title your ready-to-play Mad Lib, and submit it to www. RealityBitesBackBook.com along with the original transcript on which it was based.

Vocabulary words:

Stereotype: When assu mptions are applied to people, often based on ov ersimplified opinions, which can be used by a dominant group to maintain power.

Screen time critical thinking: Being aware of the messages, stereotypes, and ways that companies are trying to sell their products while watching TV, playing video games, using a social network, or spending any time in front of a screen.

Unplug and Play!

April 18-24

Do More, Watch Less
A week dedicated to reducing screen time

Free kick off event April 17
1 to 4pm in McCormick Park

- Hang out with Mauler mascot, SLASH!,
- Play games with UM Grizzly Athletes
- Visit with Opsrey mascot, Ollie
- Play tennis, basketball, softball, jump rope, folf,
- Arts and Crafts
- Race around the pond with Missoula Kids Marathon
- Hellgate Rollergirls
- Climb the rock wall
- Healthy snacks & much more!

FREE!!!
Parents accompany your kids to a day full of fun at the kick off event

McCormick Park event generously sponsored by: Missoula Parks & Rec, Missoula City-County Health Department, Community Medical Center, & United Way.

UNPLUG AND PLAY!

12 Fun Ways to Enjoy

Turning off the TV is an easy way to enhance your family's health and happiness. More screen time (TV, computers and video games) leads to higher weights for both kids and adults.

1. **Get up and take a walk**
2. **Get up and dance**
3. **Get up and play a game**
4. **Get up and play with a pet**
5. **Get up and play with friends**
6. **Plan a family fun night**
7. **Read a book**
8. **Tell a story**:
9. **Sing a song**
10. **Play a board game.**
11. **Listen to music**
12. **Build a fort in the kitchen**

Tips to help reduce screen time

- **Set limits on the amount of TV your child watches**. Limit children's screen-time to an hour or two daily.
- **Know what television shows your child watches**. Discuss what you see, help your child understand what they are watching
- **Do not permit TV watching during dinner.** Spend dinner talking with each other
- **Do not allow your child to have a TV set in his bedroom.** It is hard to monitor what they are watching and can lead to less sleep
- **If TV causes arguments or fights, simply unplug it for a while.** Children can be creative when TV is not taking up all their time and attention.
- **Talk to your child about Internet safety.** Explain that people they meet online are not always who they say they are.
- **Be a good role model.** Keep a check on your own viewing habits…your kids pick up habits from you!

PLEDGE CARD

Our Family _____ is participating in Screen-Free Week 2011, April 18-24. We pledge to: 1) reduce our TV time, play fewer DVD's, videogames and use the computer only for required homework assignments 2)encourage our friends and other family members to reduce their screen time 3) explore new screen-free activities and 4) HAVE FUN! Phone # _____

Instead of spending time with screens, we will:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

DID YOU KNOW???

- Researchers have discovered that middle school students who watch more TV, play more video games, and have more cable channels available during the week are less likely to do as well in school than students with less screen time exposure and cable availability.
- Children who watch a lot of TV and videos have weaker language skills than other children
- Background TV can interfere with free play time, quality time with family, strong language development and sleep quality—all of which predict success with learning
- Young children develop strong vocabularies and other language skills—which strongly predict school success—from hearing many words spoken and read directly to them each day by family members and caregivers
- Active free play helps young children develop imagination, creativity, and problem solving ability—all of which lead to positive, health promoting lifelong skills

- In a recent study of 6-13 year olds, children reported using screen media for nearly 5 ½ hours a day. When asked to provide a drawing of their favorite thing to do when they were not in school, 57% identified in-home media (TV, videogames, or computers) as a favorite activity. By comparison, only about a quarter of children featured sports or physical activities in their drawings.
- Researchers have found an association between hours spent watching TV and childhood obesity. As the number of hours spent watching TV increases so does the body fat percentage and risk of obesity.
- Currently, one third of American children and youth are either overweight or obese. Over the past 30 years, the obesity rate has quadrupled for children ages 5 to 10 years (from 4 to 19 percent).
- An estimated 61% of obese children, ages 5 to 10 years, already have at least one cardiovascular disease risk factor (such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol), and over 25% of obese children have two or more risk factors.