

Pointers For Parents

Making TV Safe For Kids—It's As Easy As 1-2-3

(NAPSA)—What kids see on TV is a concern for every parent. But how do you know which shows are right for your family? And how can you enforce your decisions about TV viewing in your home?

Parenting expert Sal Severe, Ph.D., author of "How to Behave So Your Children Will Too," says that parents only need to know three easy steps to take control of what their families see on TV. Dr. Severe is a member of TV Watch, a coalition that helps to educate parents about making informed choices about their family's TV viewing.

To help parents get started, TV Watch has created a downloadable brochure and online tutorial, as well as a free TV ratings reference sticker, all available at www.televisionwatch.org/parents.

Step 1: Know the Ratings

The TV ratings system is a guide to the content of TV shows. Shows rated TV-Y and TV-Y7 are designed specifically for children. While shows rated TV-Y are appropriate for children ages 2 to 6, shows rated TV-Y7 may be more appropriate for children ages 7 and older.

Then there are general ratings that are similar to the movie ratings: TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14 and TV-MA. TV-G shows, while not specifically designed for children, will be considered by most parents to be appropriate for all ages, while TV-PG shows include content parents may choose to watch with younger children.

Shows rated TV-14 have stronger content that parents may choose to restrict to children over the age of 14, and TV-MA shows are intended for adult audiences.



In addition to these designations, the TV ratings include content descriptors that provide additional information for parents: V (violence), FV (fantasy violence), S (sexual situations), L (coarse language) and D (suggestive dialogue).

Step 2: Decide What's Right For You And Your Family

Only parents know what their children should and should not see on TV. Dr. Severe recommends that parents set aside a time to discuss what's appropriate for their children and to decide how they want to enforce these parameters in their own homes.

Step 3: Set Parental Controls

Parental controls like the v-chip and cable and satellite content-blocking technologies are widely available. Many of these technologies allow parents to block content by the TV ratings.

Once parents decide what's right for their families, they may choose to use these tools in their homes. Setting the parental controls is easy. TV Watch has a simple tutorial to help parents get started at www.televisionwatch.org/parents.

"It is important that parents address this issue and decide what's right for their families. That's all there is to it—easy as 1-2-3," Dr. Severe said.