

Choosing Media for Children Checklist

Adapted from Dr. Faith Rogow

When thinking about the ages of the children for whom you are making media choices. Use some of the questions below to judge programs and films, keeping the capabilities and interests of the children's age group in mind:

- **Reflects or reinforces values you want to teach**
 - The characters are good role models. Characters, especially main characters or heroes, behave in ways that you want children to behave.
 - Clear, negative consequences are shown for bad behavior.
 - Uses language that you wouldn't mind children using.
 - Problems are solved in ways that children might actually be able to copy (as opposed to, for example, needing magical powers to solve problems).
 - After viewing, children are more likely to be happy and cooperative than agitated or aggressive.
- **Age-Appropriate**
 - Children can easily understand the content and language being used.
 - Raises issues relevant to the age group of children viewing.
 - Content and language used matches the level that children can understand and then adds just a little bit that is new to help children stretch their knowledge.
 - Core concepts are presented visually, i.e., shown in the pictures, not just told in dialogue or narration.
 - Action and editing are paced in ways that allow children to follow and think about what they are seeing.
 - Content is not gross, scary, or graphic at levels that might deeply frighten children. *Keep in mind that young children tend to be frightened by things that look scary. Older children tend to be frightened by things they think could actually happen.*
 - In media for very young children, no action is shown that would be unsafe for a child to copy.

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- **Values viewers as learners and citizens**
 - The program or film is not designed for the purpose of selling a toy.
 - Neither content nor promotion encourages children to ask grown-ups to buy things for them, especially things that might not be good for them.
 - Characters are judged for their character, not for what they own or wear.
 - Characters are judged based on what they do, not who they are (e.g., physical appearance, race, religion, etc.).
 - Avoids simplistic answers to complex problems.
 - Presents problem-solving opportunities and includes pauses before answers are provided to allow time for viewers to figure out answers for themselves.
 - After viewing, you and your child have interesting things to talk about.
 - Models respect for others.
- **Entertaining as well as educational**
 - Gets children excited about learning.
 - Covers topics in which children have shown an interest.
 - Children enjoy the time they spend viewing.
 - It also helps if grown-ups enjoy viewing, but sometimes what makes media age-appropriate for young children can bore adults, so this isn't a requirement.