



What About the News?

TV news stories are written for grown-ups. We might think it helpful for children to watch the news and learn about the world around them. However, most television news tends to focus on events that are shocking or dramatic. It often shows clips of disasters, attacks, and other kinds of human suffering. The news does not provide the kinds of information children need to understand an incident and put it in perspective.

Because children haven't had much experience in the world, they lack the "lens" adults have to understand and digest news events. The pictures and sound bites in news programs can be very disturbing to children.

Once children do begin watching the news—third or fourth grade, depending upon their maturity—it is important for parents or other adults to watch with them so they can discuss the events they see. Talking about what they see helps children learn how the events in the news fit into their world, especially a tragedy or crisis that touches their lives.



Watch and Discuss the News Together

Help your children distinguish between international, national and local news. Talk about how news that happens someplace else can affect you and your neighborhood. Be sure to encourage a sense of perspective—if the news reports on a police officer that has done something wrong, talk about why it was wrong and what would have been the right thing to do. Then list the good things police officers do every day.



Evaluate TV News with Your Children

Depending on your child's age or interests, discuss what you've seen on the news. Ask your children questions, such as:

- *Who was involved?*
- *What happened?*
- *How did it happen?*
- *Was the news report based on facts or someone's opinion?*
- *How do you feel about this news report?*



A News-Reporting Activity for You and Your Children

Encourage your children to write their own news reports about an event in their lives. Tell the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the event. Let them deliver their reports in a mock news broadcast at the dinner or breakfast table. If you have access to a video camera, tape your children's "news reports" and then play them back.