

# The Simpsons and More on Family TV

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From February to May 2003 the Canadian Teacher's Federation surveyed more than 5,700 children from every province and territory with participation from 122 schools in 37 different school boards. The response rate was 93%. The Survey was commissioned as part of the CTC's Media Research & Education Program. They discovered that:

- 48% of Canadian children, aged 8-15, have their own TV. 26% have their own computer hooked up to the Internet.
- The top show children chose was *The Simpsons* yet they expressed the opinion that younger children shouldn't be watching it.
- Children grades 5 and under are the ones most frightened by the news, feeling their personal safety is at risk. Frequent news watchers feel more worried about the world, but more inclined to do something about it.
- Children believe that there should be tighter age restrictions on mature-rated video and computer games than on R-Rated films.

## Tips for Parents

**You Decide:** with younger children choose for them what they will watch and with older ones choose with them. Watch TV with your children as often as you can. Avoid TVs in children's rooms to increase supervision and family discussion, and minimize excessive or inappropriate viewing.

**Intervene:** Say something or turn the TV off and then discuss inappropriate violence, racism or sexism. Encourage discussion by listening to your children's point of view. "What do you like about this show? How is the story going to end? How do you feel watching this? Could this really happen? How would you solve the problem?" Discuss news items: "What is this story/event about? How might we do something to help?"

**Make Informed Decisions:** Read descriptions of shows, videos and electronic games. Attend to the warnings of "Not for mature audiences." Watch for restless sleep and anxiety.

**Be Supportive:** Acknowledge wise media choices your children make.

**Encourage Many Activities.** Think "active." Excessive TV watching is linked to diabetes and obesity in children. Research indicates that children who are engaged in activities including clubs, sports, reading and other hobbies see the media more realistically.

For the full report go to <http://www.ctf-fce.ca>.

Also visit:

- Media Awareness Network at <http://www.media-awareness.ca>,
- Concerned Children's Advertisers at <http://www.cca-canada.com>,

- Positive Entertainment Alternatives for Children Everywhere at <http://www.trop-peace.com>
- Media Watch at <http://www.mediawatch.ca>

Here are some oldie but family safe and recommended movies from The New York Times ***Essential Library: Children's Movies*** by film critic, Peter Nichols:

- Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)
- The Little Mermaid (1989)
- The Lion King (1994)
- The Wizard of Oz (1939)
- Fiddler on the Rood (1971)
- Mary Poppins (1964)
- The Music Man (1964)
- My Fair Lady (1964)
- The Sound of Music (1965)
- The African Queen (1951)
- To Kill a Mockingbird (1961)
- Lawrence of Arabia (1962)
- Shane (1953)
- Babe (1995)
- The Bear (1988)
- The Black Stallion (1979)
- National Velvet (1944)
- The Secret of Roan Irish (1994)
- E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial (1982)

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