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HOW DO I LIMIT CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO BIAS IN MEDIA?

From the ADL's Miller Early Childhood Initiative Question Corner

Media, such as television, movies, videos, DVDs, CD-ROMs and websites, can have a powerful influence on your child. Children are drawn to the sights, sounds and colors that appear on the television screen or computer monitor. Media can provide exciting and unique learning opportunities. Learning from and about media works best when you and your child watch and learn together and talk about what you are viewing.

Remember that there are some media that are never appropriate for young children, such as adult discussions, adult dramas, comedies with adult humor and sometimes even the news. To guide you in selecting appropriate media for your child, use the same [checklist](#) for selecting inclusive children's literature, and ADL's [online bibliography](#) of children's books.



Here are some other things to consider:

WATCH WHAT YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING

Be sure that you view all the media your child regularly watches or uses. Find opportunities to talk with your child about media. You might say, "I like this video game because the girls are strong and solve problems." By watching together, you can also ensure that what she is watching is appropriate for her age.

IS IT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE?

The best media for young children are developed specifically for their particular age group. There is a coding system for television shows and movies that helps parents choose what's best for their children. You can find this information in television and movie listings, and on most video and CD-ROM packaging.

HELP CHILDREN MAKE SENSE OF WHAT THEY SEE.

Your child can pick up a lot of messages from the images in media. You can help shape children's feelings about how people who are similar and different from them are depicted. Ask questions, such as, "Do you think that's the way all older people act? How about Grandma?" Offer points for children to think about, such as, "The boy in that story likes rice just like you," and let your child know your own opinions, "That princess was really smart; she didn't let anyone tell her what to do."

LET MEDIA BE A MIRROR

Be sure that your children see people who look like themselves in the media they view. If that doesn't happen, provide other opportunities for your children to see themselves reflected in positive roles in the media. Your child's sense of self-esteem and role in society can be negatively influenced by such exclusion and by negative portrayals.

PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN ONLINE

Be sure to prevent your children from the increase of hateful material on the Internet. Some ways to do this include searching Internet sites with children, paying attention to the sites they visit, encouraging discussions and questions about these sites and exploring Internet safeguard and filter software options.

Excerpted from *Bias-Free Foundations: Early Childhood Activities for Families* (2001, 15) and *Hate Hurts: How Children Learn and Unlearn Prejudice* (2000, 307).