

Preschoolers' Cognitive Development and Child Care Arrangements

Television viewing

Regardless of whether children spend their preschool years at home or at child care centers, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children under two years of age should not watch television and children above two years of age should be limited to a maximum of two hours of television viewing. Despite this warning, many programs, such as *Baby Einstein* and *Your Baby Can Read*, claim (through advertisements) that watching them improves children's learning. These programs have been widely criticized by child development experts because they make extreme, and often impossible, claims about the cognitive abilities of young children.

You can read more about this controversy in the following articles:

- Your Baby Can Read
<http://www.today.com/parents/your-baby-can-read-claims-overblown-experts-say-2D80555479>
- Baby Einstein Article
<http://www.seattlepi.com/local/article/Baby-Einstein-heading-to-grown-up-court-over-UW-884921.php>

According to experts, the best way to teach children is to engage them in learning activities through personal interaction and communication—not seating them in front of a television. However, although experts criticize most television programs meant for children, some programs actually improve learning in young children.

For example, studies have found that children who watched the popular Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) show *Sesame Street* demonstrated more developed skills, such as increased vocabulary, greater number memory, and better letter recitation, than children who did not watch the show. In addition, recent television programs such as *Dora the Explorer* and *Blue's Clues* are believed to improve school readiness.