

Video drain

What was good for baby may not be

Baby videos, which have been trumpeted in this magazine and elsewhere as a great way to get the knowledge factor going, may in fact have the opposite effect.

A stunning study by university researchers indicates that infants 8-16 months old watching these educational videos actually are slower to pick up words than those who spend more face time with parents and caregivers. The videos do not affect older children, 17 to 24 months old, the study by the University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital Research Institute reports.

Parents for the past decade have flocked to "Baby Einstein" and other vocabulary-rich programming in the belief that they provide early language learning.

"The results surprised us, but they make sense," says the lead researcher Andrew Meltzoff, a university professor of pediatrics and co-director of UW's Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences. "There are only a fixed number of hours that young babies are awake and alert. If the 'alert time' is spent in front of DVDs and TV instead of with people speaking in 'parentese' – that melodic speech we use with little ones – the babies are not getting the same linguistic experience."



On a related report about how much TV and DVDs babies and young kids are watching: uwnews.washington.edu/ni/article.asp?articleID=32790 ○

Memo to readers: Join in the debate by writing to our Letters: Go to ocfamily.com and click on Feedback.

Ripple Kid of the Month

This monthly nomination is about the act of giving back. An Orange County nonprofit, Ripple Kids, Inc., features youth who are changing their community: a "ripple effect."

We ask parents and schools to nominate these contributors, ages 13 and under. Please contact founder Bridget Belden, who is blogging about children making a difference, at ripplekids.ocfamily.com. This month's selection is Sabrina, 9, of Tustin, and her donations of bracelets. Read about her online. ○



familytech

Violence

TV takes a toll on kids

Recent research from the Parents Television Council (PTC) found that violence on prime-time TV has increased 75% since 1998, rising in the 8 p.m. "Family Hour" by 45%.

Studies show that viewing high levels of violence can evoke unsettling responses in viewers, especially in young kids. Some effects include:

› **Monkey see, monkey do:** Viewers of TV violence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors.

› **Exaggerated emotions:** Young viewers may have intense responses of fear and anxiety. Exposure to televised violence could lead to fears of being victimized and sleep disturbances.

› **Desensitization:** Repeated exposure to televised violence may lead viewers to exhibit less sympathy for victims of violence and a decreased willingness to intervene in a conflict.

Protagonists are now praised for acts of torture, murder, and bullying, according to Deborah A. Fisher, Ph.D., in the January 2007 edition of a Special Report published by the PTC.

"Given that, on average, American

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