

# To what extent is television educationally beneficial for children?

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To what extent is television educationally beneficial for children? Information from Boston Municipal Research Bureau suggests that children aged from 11 to 15 in Britain averagely watching TV for more than 50 hours per week, which may be considered as too much as nearly half of their daytime excluding 8 hours' sleeping period. (BBC, 2011) Since children's television-viewing time occupying almost a third of a day, the sense of its educational virtue has to be confirmed.

By the means of children, Oxford English Dictionary gives explanation of which a child is anybody between birth and puberty or in the developmental stage of childhood, between babyhood and adult years. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2007, p. 397) Therefore, adolescents with different age-groups may educational benefit from television viewing with limitations of at an appropriate age, in a moderate amount and with a suitable content.

Afterwards, this essay will give explanations revolved around the three conditions correspondingly.

Firstly, age differences between adolescents may be considered as one of the three factors that influence the extent of educational benefits from television watching. Zimmerman and Christakis's research gives a general idea of different cognitive outcomes of children's television watching, which have been showed within different age groups. (Zimmerman and Christakis, 2005, p. 619) To be more specific, their analysis suggested that TV watching at an age level between 3 and 5 years old represented a beneficial impact, especially for the results of reading recognition and short-term memory.

Zimmerman and Christakis, 2005, p. 623) Nevertheless, some other research claimed that attention problems (such as distractive or daydreams a lot )  
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might be caused to children when they are exposed in front of TV at an early age which younger than 3 years old. (Zimmerman, Christakis, et. al. , 2004, p. 710) Thus, children can improve their academic achievement by watching television only in a recommended age by enhancing their short-term memory and reading ability. In spite, as a result of the large amount of television viewing period, there is still a modest effect of television. (Zimmerman and Christakis, 2005, p. 620) Therefore, the length of their watching hours also need to be limited. Secondly, beyond the condition of suitable age, the amount of their viewing time will be discussed as another one for children to benefit from TV. To begin with evidences, educational benefits of children from television watching have been suggested relating to the time spend in front of televisions. (Aletha, John, et. al. , 1999, p. 5) However, the possibility of relationship between television viewing time and other activities' time spending need to be proved.

Which may be explained with the situation of children may present outcomes differently in same amount of television viewing period due to their other activities' time spending. A controlled study among 1712 children (younger than 13 years old) suggested that the more time children spending in front of television, the less time they spending on homework doing (age 7-12) and creative playing (age 0-5). (Vandewater, Bickham, et. al. 2005, p. e188) Besides, these two activities can be seemed as appropriate for children to develop their academic achievement. Vandewater, Bickham, et. al. 2005, p. e183) In addition, in order to reduce potential harm to adolescents if they choose to stay in front TV set rather than doing other activities as mentioned, the specific amount of their viewing time should be confirmed.

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Fortunately, an article suggested that the amount of children's television viewing period is recommended to 1 to 2 hours a day, which is based on the qualitative study of young people of 6 to 13 years old. (Jordan and Hersey, 2006, p. e1303, p. 306) According to above, children maybe benefit from television watching in an educational way, not only because they are kept in a suitable age group, but also should be limited with time spending of less than 2 hours every day. And also they may be recommended to spend slightly more time in playing creative games or doing homework.

Additionally, a child who is in the suitable age group and has a normal television viewing amount as suggested, will be educationally beneficial from TV only if the content of their watching is limited to the certain areas which have been proved beneficial to them.

Further, those certain areas have been mentioned in Aletha Huston and John Wright's research, which both social and intellectual education can be improved during TV watching within the content of episodes programs.

(Aletha and John, 1998, p. 9) In a addition, a general format of children's television community has been introduced and explained in an article which suggested adolescents' speaking and picturing ability may be enhanced by television viewing in three types of TV program content.

In detailed information, the particular types are Governmental bodies, Commercials and Educational program creators. (Bryant and Monge, 2008, p. 162) More specifically, educational relating program has been confirmed in their research as helpful to youngster by recognizing or identifying different articles with different shapes and colors. Moreover, linguistic ability as a

fundamental factor which is helpful to children to make academic achievements may also be improved during television viewing with educational relating content but not commercial or governmental programs. (Bryant and Monge, 2008, p. 163) Despite that, there may be no clear evidences to confirm the relationship between educational television watching and children's mathematical development in recent 5 years. Also, many of the television programs may be blamed to have negative effects on children's behavioral education. To be more detailed, obesity may be caused by watching TV commercials such as food productions and by viewing educational programs continually for more than 2.5 hours a day in general, due to time reducing in physical activities. (Zimmerman and Bell, 2010, p. 36) Furthermore, potential violent behaviors may be caused by television programs and commercials within inappropriate content with violent and aggressive images which are not specifically made for them, which 95% of whom are still watching. (Christakis and Zimmerman, 2007, p. 995) Finally, as a conclusion of this essay, as mentioned, the extent of educational benefits that children can get from television watching is seemed to be limited to an appropriate age of more than 3 years old in general, with less than 2 hours watching time daily, and also with suitable content with educational sense avoiding aggressive and violent plot.

Therefore, based on the forward three conditions, adolescents' potential academic achievement may be enhanced by improving their short-term memory, promoting linguistic and literate abilities of reading and communicating and also advancing their simple cognitive ability of objects. While on the other hand, potential hazards exist in television viewing among

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youth, which they may become aggressive, violent, obesity or have attentional problems. Summarily, the question of on what extent can children educational benefit from television watching is on children themselves. REFERENCES: • BBC, (2011).

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