

Television Budget

The Kaiser Family Foundation (2010) found that children ages 6-18 spend over three hours a day watching television and more than seven hours a day using other media devices. Studies have shown a strong link between television time and increased risk of becoming overweight or obese. The following family activity might be a challenge at the beginning, but as you each get used to the new activities, you might even look forward to them more than your “favorite” television shows!

A Family Strategy to Reduce “Screen Time”

Directions: Together as a family, create a “Television Budget” for one week and try it for the month. Feel free to use the sample chart or create your own. Make sure to post your budget and work together to stick to it. If you want to add television time, vote on it as a family and then make sure you adjust and/or increase your activity time to balance your change.

Step 1: Each family member tracks how much television they watch over the course of one week.

Step 2: In order to get closer to the allowed two hours each day, each family member will need to look at their tracking form from the week before to find times to reduce.

Step 3: Family members pick their favorite shows they want to watch. Eliminate time spent just ‘channel surfing’. Self-monitoring is a very powerful behavior modification tool.

Note: By week three, members should be close to watching only two hours of television each day.

Step 4: Create alternate physical activities to replace the “extra” time (i.e. going for a walk, riding bicycles, going to a park, playing active games, etc).

Tip: If you increase your physical activity, you may decide to add some extra “screen time” as a reward. This helps children start to learn about calorie balance and energy expenditure.

Television Budget

Sample Television Log:

Day	Television Time
Goal: To reduce screen time to two hours per day.	
Monday	3-5 p.m. – Show A 7-8 p.m. – Show B 9-10:30 – Show C Total: 4.5 Hours
Tuesday	7-8 p.m. – Show D 9-10:30 – Show C Total: 2.5 Hours
Wednesday	10-10:30 a.m. – Show E 7-8 p.m. – Channel Surfing 9-10:30 – Show C Total: 3.0 Hours
Thursday	4-6 p.m. – Show F 7-8 p.m. – Show D 9-10:30 – Show C Total: 4.5 Hours
Friday	9-10:30 – Show C Total: 1.5 Hours
Saturday	1-3 p.m. – Movie 5-6 p.m. – Show G Total: 3.0 Hours
Sunday	12-2:30 p.m. – Movie 5-6 p.m. – Channel Surfing Total: 3.5 Hours
TOTAL TELEVISION TIME	22.5 Hours
AVERAGE TELEVISION TIME PER DAY	3.2 Hours

This person needs to reduce their television time by 1.2 hours per day. As you can see, they watched less than two hours on Friday. A good way to reduce screen time is to eliminate the shows you don't enjoy as much, as well as eliminate time spent channel surfing.