

preschoolers.

Television and other media also have their place in children's play, although each should be only one part of children's total repertoire of social and recreational activities. Time spent watching television may limit time spent in other meaningful activities, such as reading, physical activity, and socialization ([American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013b](#)). Considering the significant increase in media accessibility through various portable electronic devices and smart phones, parents need to be aware of the potential positive and negative effects of media exposure. Parents and other caregivers should supervise the selection of media, watch and discuss programs with their children, schedule limited time for media exposure, and set a good example of media use ([Strasburger and American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Communications and Media, 2010](#)). When parents view media with their children and discuss program content, the activity can become interactive and educational.

Play is so much a part of young children's lives that reality and fantasy become blurred. Make-believe is reality during play and only becomes fantasy when the toys are put away or the dress-up clothes are removed. It is no wonder that imaginary playmates are so much a part of this age period. The appearance of imaginary companions usually occurs between $2\frac{1}{2}$ and 3 years old, and for the most part, such playmates are relinquished when the child enters school. Differences in birth order and gender have been noted in studies of imaginary companion play. Firstborn children have a higher incidence of imaginary companions, as do young girls; young boys tend to impersonate characters more often ([Trionfi and Reese, 2009](#)).

Imaginary companions serve many purposes: They become friends in times of loneliness, they accomplish what the child is still attempting, and they experience what the child wants to forget or remember. It is not unusual for the "friend" to have myriad vices and to be blamed for wrongdoing. Sometimes the child hopes to escape punishment by saying, "My friend George broke the glass." At other times, the child may fantasize that the companion misbehaved and play the role of the parent. This becomes a way of assuming control and authority in a safe situation.