

# Kids Media Web Site Prototype

*Today's world is flooded with media of various kinds - especially for children. With media as an unavoidable part of children's lives, it is important to know how to filter through that media and how to use it properly. This website is an easily digestible, curated website of information for parents trying to navigate that media landscape for their 2-5 year old children. There are also links to additional resources for parents to read more information, a quiz to see how they measure up, a place for parents to communicate together, and a list of recommended titles for them to start.*

## Sections/Subpages

1. Landing page: General Principles and Concepts
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## **Landing page: General Principles and Concepts**

- *Not Only **What** Media You Use, But **How** You Use It*
  - *Everyday “Diet” for Children for Healthy Growth and Development*
- *Quality, Not Quantity - What apps are “good” for preschoolers?*
- *How Do You Measure Up?*
- *Community Page: Speak to Others*
- *Learn Even More....*

## Subpage: Strategies and Activities

### *Design a 'healthy media diet'*

- See the Recommended Titles page
- Media is but one aspect of children's lives. Ideally, they should be well-rounded in the following activities:
  - Proper nutrition
  - Physical Play/Hands-on Exploration/Outside Play
  - Reading
  - Imaginative Play
  - Social/Family Interaction
  - Media

### *Set time limits for screen time*

- Without these limits, children will be at risk for all those scary things that experts say come with excessive media use: obesity, fewer hours of sleep, and developmental concerns.
- Screens should not be used an hour before bedtime, as it can interfere with sleep patterns- the more sleep your child gets, the happier you both will be!
- For kids under 18-24 months, limit media use to facetime.
- For kids from 18 months to five years of age, limit media use to about an hour a day to make time for the rest of the "pyramid" (i.e. other important activities for your child's development).
- Turn off screens when they are not being used! They can be distracting from other activities.

### *Establish tech-free/"unplugged" zones*

- By establishing certain rooms or times of day as "no tech allowed," children understand that this is a limit they cannot break. Children appreciate limits to understand that they are secure.
  - Examples of this are: Family time, meal times, in bedrooms, etc.
- These places and times can be used for the rest of the "pyramid" - imaginative play, reading, social interactions, eating, etc.

### *Overcome the use of media as "default mode" - or the default "babysitter" mode*

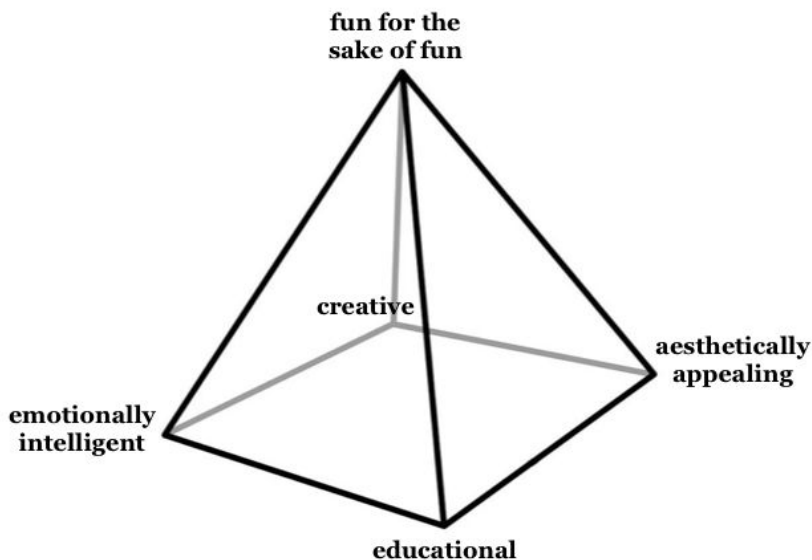
- Use media as a time to bond with your child, by asking questions and becoming involved in the things that make them happy and engaged.

- Your engagement will help avoid the “tech-addicted” child we all fear - it will encourage emotion regulation and impulse control as you collaborate and ask questions.
  - They will also learn cognitive, literacy, and social skills - all of which are enhanced by having a parent or adult help them understand what they are seeing.
- Choose media that you can enjoy watching/playing with your child, not “annoying” ones that you don’t want to sit through.
- You can also use media as a time for your child to interact with or bond with others in their lives (i.e., through FaceTime).
  - This will enhance their social skills!
- It’s important for parents to use media *with* their child, in order for them to:
  - Transfer knowledge from media to the real world
  - Enhance learning by sharing the experience
  - Be able to hear an adult “reteach” the content or ask questions to further engage
  - Have an opportunity for parent-child interactions and discussions
  - Build relationships
- Curate a collection of physical toys or books, or even just a free space for your child to play in physically or imaginatively.
  - Make this a safe space for the child to play freely when you have other things to do, so that media isn’t the only option.
  - It can also be an art space for children to express themselves creatively.
- Be mindful of your own media use as a parent - increased usage takes you away from parent-child interactions (both verbal and in play) and may influence their child’s habits as well.
- Use media to be creative and social:
  - Use what was seen or learned from media to encourage conversation with others.
  - Maybe you learned about a new kind of tree or animal in a show - go find it in real life! Or perhaps you learned about a new thing to create or cook - go make it!
    - Bridge the gap between media and real life learning.

## Subpage: Recommended Titles

### *Make planned and sensible choices*

- Media that is *well-designed* and *researched by educational consultants/child psychologists/other specialists and the like* are proven to improve “cognitive, literacy, and social outcomes” for children.
- Avoid media that has extra enhancements that make it distracting for children to follow or learn. It shouldn't be too fast paced. These can also have a negative effect on children's concentration.
  - eBooks especially should be without distractions, so children can focus on their own reading, literacy skills, and imagination.
- Diversify your collection so that children are not spending all their time on one activity.
  - There are open ended apps that encourage creativity, shows that teach reading, and videos that work on social skills - don't limit yourself!
- Components of quality
  - Educational (Tinybop)
  - Emotionally intelligent (Daniel Tiger)
  - Creative (Kidpix Studio)
  - Aesthetically appealing (Toca Boca)
  - Fun for the sake of fun (Sago Mini)



### *EXAMPLES:*

## *Movies*

### **Frozen**

Yes, I'm tired of "Let It Go" too. But Frozen has much to recommend it. It's the most feminist Disney movie, with women as the action heroes and men as sidekicks or comic relief. There is no true villain--Elsa is misunderstood and petulant, not malevolent. The climax of the movie is a reconciliation, not a violent defeat. There are some anti-Semitic stereotypes, of course, since it's a Disney movie. Still, on balance, more helpful than harmful.

*Emotionally Intelligent, Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **All of the Pixar movies [Inside Out!]**

Some of them are too violent or emotionally intense for little kids. Cars and Cars 2 are pretty terrible. But in general, these movies are gorgeous, well acted, well written, and powerful.

*Educational, Emotionally Intelligent, Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **The Peanuts specials**

Weird, stilted acting by actual children, low-budget animation, magnificent soundtracks.

*Emotionally Intelligent, Aesthetically Appealing*

### **The Many Adventures of Winnie-The-Pooh**

Old-fashioned and slowly paced, but sweet in its way.

*Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

## *TV*

### **Sesame Street**

Every bit as delightful and excellent as it was when you were a kid. Don't miss Usher's version of the alphabet song.

*Educational, Emotionally Intelligent, Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood**

Produced by the Mr Rogers people. Same emotional intelligence and toddler-friendly songs, but delivered by an animated tiger rather than a sweet old guy in a cardigan.

*Emotionally Intelligent, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **Peppa Pig**

Droll, psychologically realistic, and very British. If you like this, Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom is made by the same people.

*Emotionally Intelligent, Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **Charlie and Lola**

More charming and emotionally believable British animation.

*Emotionally Intelligent, Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **Octonauts**

A team of animal scientists have underwater adventures. For budding marine biologists.

*Educational, Aesthetically Appealing*

### **Paw Patrol**

Positive messages about teamwork, conflict resolution, and helping others.

*Emotionally Intelligent, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **Taratabong**

Anthropomorphized musical instruments. Totally weird, but superb music education.

*Educational, Aesthetically Appealing*

### **Dinosaur Train**

Learn science from dinosaurs, on a train.

*Educational*

## *Apps*

### **All Toca Boca apps**

The gold standard for interaction design. Toca Boca understands the play patterns of young kids well. The “games” have no winning and losing. You just interact for the sake of interacting. I would have thought kids would get bored without a goal or any competition, but I was wrong. The animation and sound design show loving attention to detail. I have yet to find an app of theirs that I wouldn’t recommend.

*Educational, Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **All Tinybop apps**

Education apps with a fresh and unique nonverbal interaction style. The user interfaces are innovative and they reward playful exploration. Like Toca Boca, there is a strong design aesthetic at work that is a significant pleasure before you even get to the well thought out content.

*Educational, Aesthetically Appealing*

### **All Sago Mini apps**

Toca Boca’s sister company, with a similar aesthetic, but aimed at younger kids. These apps are less about simulating the real world, and more about cartoony action. The interaction design is too simple for my tastes - mostly you just zoom a character around and trigger preset animation sequences - but the apps are attractive, fun, and perfectly harmless.

*Aesthetically Appealing, Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **All Daniel Tiger apps**

The interaction design is nothing to write home about, but your kids won't care, and the apps provide the same insightful learning opportunities as the show.

*Educational, Emotionally Intelligent*

### **PBS Kids**

Convenient place to watch several of the shows listed above.

*Educational, Emotionally Intelligent*

### **YouTube Kids**

What it sounds like: a kid-friendly version of YouTube, with an approachable user interface, hand-curated content, and reasonably non-obnoxious advertising. The signal to noise ratio is low--you would never guess there would be so much homemade low-budget animation set to public domain nursery rhymes in the world--but it also surfaces some of the wonderful shows and movies mentioned above, and there's nothing particularly harmful otherwise.

*Fun for the Sake of Fun*

### **GarageBand**

The mobile version of Apple's entry-level music production tool is superbly accessible to even very young children. The smart instruments make it impossible to play anything that sounds bad. The interface might take some guidance on your part, but each instrument is easily discoverable, the graphics are attractive, and the sound quality is at a professional level.

*Creative, Aesthetically Appealing*

### **Nodebeat**

A strange but mesmerizing generative ambient music tool. It's difficult to describe. Just try it. Kids as young as eighteen months old can meaningfully interact with it.

*Creative, Aesthetically Appealing*

### **Bebot**

It seems like nothing more than a cute little singing robot, but if you open up the menu and start exploring the presets, you discover a remarkably robust musical instrument with broad and deep synth geek appeal.

*Creative, Aesthetically Appealing*

### **Drawing Pad**

There are a lot of drawing apps out there, including tons of trashy freebies. Spend a couple of bucks for this one instead.

*Creative, Aesthetically Appealing*



## Subpage: Quiz

1. When your child is using media of any kind, what are you doing?
  - a. Sitting next to them, but doing my own thing
  - b. Sitting next to them, watching/using with them
  - c. Somewhere else, but checking in
  - d. Somewhere else, doing my own thing

*Response: It is important for parents to be using media with their children in order to help them transfer skills to the real world, to foster parent-child relationships, and to give parents a better idea of how their children are spending their time.*

2. When searching for new apps/shows for your child, what do you look for?
  - a. I make sure it is teaching something
  - b. I look to see if it is straightforward without a lot of bells and whistles
  - c. I don't have any criteria
  - d. I make sure it has received input from developmental specialists.

*Response: Many apps and shows are labeled as "educational" but it is important to make sure that these are quality programming that has received input from educational/developmental specialists, don't have too many distractions from learning, and/or that it promotes interaction, connection, and creativity.*

3. I use media to...
  - a. Babysit my child
  - b. Connect with others (i.e. via FaceTime or to use the time to interact with my child)
  - c. Calm my child down
  - d. Teach them new things

*Response: When children are just thrown in front of apps when they are upset or bored, they don't develop the proper skills to self-regulate in difficult situations. Instead it can be used as a time to connect and learn new things.*

4. My child uses media
  - a. All the time - I don't set any limits
  - b. Only as part of their day
  - c. Before bedtime
  - d. When they are having a hard time

*Response: Using media before bedtime can distract children and impact their sleep patterns, and using it all the time can lessen time their time spent on other important*

*activities for their development. Additionally, using media only when they are having a hard time limits their ability to self-regulate. For children under 18-24 months, media should be limited to FaceTime. For kids 18 months to 5 years, it should be limited to quality programming, no more than one hour a day.*

5. Other than media, my child spends time
  - a. With family and friends
  - b. Engaging in physical or imaginative play
  - c. Reading
  - d. None of these apply

*Response: It is important for children to use media only as a part of their daily life - all of these other activities are needed for children to grow developmentally and physically.*

## Subpage: Community

Forum for parents to discuss our recommendations (both for shows and strategies) and make their own (all in accordance to the components of quality- each new suggestion will come with option to check off all, some, or none of the components. These won't be added into the database until they have been checked by experts or vetted in some way).

### *Example community posts*

“Common Sense Media puts The Jungle Book (the old-school animated one) on a lot of its best-of lists, and I loved it as a kid, but it is super, super racist.”

“The Beat Bugs seems like a good idea: animated insects act out Beatles songs. But the stories are dreadful and the Beatles covers are annoyingly tacky. Just listen to the records and watch A Bug's Life.”

“Baby Einstein is such a scam. Kids learn better from organic play experiences than these glorified flash cards.”

“I suppose Caillou is harmless enough, but the title character is so simperingly irritating that you'll lose years of your life hating him.”

“Something that really helps my child calm down after taking away his media is to distract him with something else he loves - like a book or toy”

“Mealtimes are really hard without some kind of media- especially at a restaurant. I try to engage my child in talking about her day or even about various media she watches. I love having that time with her- we can really bond.”

## **Subpage: Recommended Resources**

[New American Association of Pediatrics guidelines](#)

[Common Sense Media Seal Honorees for ages 2-5, ranked by best rated](#)

[Healthy Children Media Plan](#)