

## LEARNING TO READ USING TELEVISION WISELY

Many families today have just a little bit of time together before and after the work day. If that sounds like you, *you'll probably want to use the time you have with your children to have fun, to enjoy one another and to help your children grow and learn.* If so, *you'll want to think carefully about how much and when your youngest children watch television.* .

Some families use the television set to entertain their children while the parents are busy with chores like getting dinner ready or cleaning up afterwards. But, if you want, you could include your child in the dinner preparations and give him a real job—one that will really help—with the clean-up. *Making a meal together is a great time to talk over your days,* to check in on what happened with your little one at preschool or childcare. *You'll be giving your child practice in talking and you'll be letting him know, too, how much you like his company.* When children talk with their parents, they tend to learn more words. *The more words they know when they start school, the easier it may be when they learn to read.*

But sometimes you might just want to work by yourself. If you decide to use television to keep your child busy while you fix a meal, *be sure you know what your child is watching.* A story tape or d.v.d. for a book you've read or a show about animals you've seen—or are going to see—at the zoo will help your child remember and use the language she's already heard. She'll probably recognize favorite characters from the book and she might remember favorite animals from the zoo. *Be sure to talk about the story tape or the show when you sit down for lunch or dinner.* The time you spend talking together about what she saw—what the characters or animals did—is *great practice for developing your child's skill in using words.*

Please don't trade reading a story book to your child at bedtime, or telling him a story, for a television story. *There's a big difference between stories on television and a story you read or tell yourself.* Watching a tape or a show just isn't the same. Just think about it: *when you read the story to your child, you're right there, next to him.* You can see what he's interested in, you can answer his questions or go faster if he wants you to get to his favorite part! He can fill in the words he's memorized from the times you've read this story before. Probably—and this is most important—*this is special time for just you and your child. It's a nice way to end the day.*

Plus, *it's a terrific way to practice all the skills your little one will put to good use later, when she's in school and learning to read stories for herself!*