INFANT LanguageLink

WATCHING TV TOGETHER

Watching TV and films is something that we all enjoy and is often a crucial tool for entertaining children at home. It gets a lot of bad press and while long periods of watching TV aren't good for anyone, it depends on how you use it. Children are not likely to develop their speech and language skills while watching TV or films if there is no discussion or interaction with you while they watch. However, It is a perfect activity to get children talking and here are some ideas of how you can use it to support their speech and language skills:

- Talk about what your child is watching and comment on parts that you like or enjoyed, providing a model of language for them. For example, telling them "I really liked the bit where…" or "I thought it was really exciting when…" will help to encourage them to tell you what they enjoyed.
- Encourage your child to tell you what happened in the TV programme or film that you watched. They can do this verbally or you can act out a scene together in role play or using toys as characters from the show. You could make up a different ending together or make up your own story of what the characters could do.
- If you are watching a film or TV programme together and you ask a question like 'Did you like the film?' you will probably get only a one-word answer. Ask specific questions about 'who' is in the show, 'what they were doing', 'where they went' and 'what happened'. For older children, try asking them more complex questions such as 'when' something happened and 'why' something happened. Then encourage them to ask you questions about what you have watched together. This will develop their understanding of question words and how to ask questions.
- Pause a film or TV programme that you are watching and ask your child to guess what might happen next. This will help them to develop their prediction and problem-solving skills. You can both make a guess and see who is closest to what happens.
- Talk about the different characters you are watching and how they are feeling, for example are they happy, sad, angry, worried etc. You can model this for your child to support them to be able to tell you about different feelings e.g. "I think the mouse is feeling scared because the snake is very big."
- You can use TV and films to practise talking about things in the past and in the future. You can talk about the past by talking about things that happened in the show such as where the characters went, when it happened and what they did. Then talk about the future by saying what might happen next or how someone might feel. You can talk about this to give them examples of how to do this e.g. "They **went** to the cinema", "he **ran** really fast", "he **is going to** feel very tired".

