

## Is television a good influence on young people?

- Choose two different colours and underline the arguments for and against television in this report.
- Talk to an adult about what you have marked for and against.

In an age when many children have television in their bedrooms, questions are increasingly being asked about whether television is harmful to young people. Most children enjoy watching it, but does that make it good for them?

Watching television can be a good way to relax after a busy day at school. It can also be an enjoyable family activity, sharing a film or programme such as *Doctor Who*. On the other hand, it is a very static activity and concerns have been expressed that watching too much television is one reason why many more children are overweight now than was the case 20 years ago.

Some parents say that giving children their own television sets avoids arguments and lets everyone watch what they want to. The downside of this is that children are less used to sharing and taking turns, and watching television can become a very solitary activity. Also, do parents know what their children are watching? There are many programmes which are not suitable for children, but the children themselves may not recognise this. Some children are watching late into the night, when they should be sleeping, and end up being too tired to concentrate in school.

There are many excellent programmes that entertain and inform us. Television allows us to keep up with the world through news and documentaries, some of which are made for a younger audience, such as *Newsround*. Television also allows us to ‘experience’ things in a way that is not possible by reading a book on the same topic: for example, watching lions in their natural habitat. Television also exposes us to other people’s views and helps us to develop our own ideas and opinions about the world. By contrast, some of the soap operas and cartoons broadcast are often seen as ‘worthless’.

Advertising on television is another issue. Some would argue it is a form of brainwashing, persuading us to buy things we don’t really need or can’t afford and encouraging children to nag their parents to buy them certain foods or the latest toy.

There are clearly strong arguments on both sides, but having read this, maybe you will be discriminating in what you watch and how much to believe of what television shows us.

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**Self-evaluation**

How hard I worked:

