



BETTER
KID CARE
PROGRAM



Family Time Work Time

A B A L A N C I N G A C T

Building Strong Families

Go Outside and Play!



Remember back to those days when your parents told you regularly, "Go outside and play?" Today's children are in danger of losing those experiences. With so many hours spent in child care and time at home on the computer or watching television each day, many children do not spend time just going out to play.

Busy working parents go from home, to child care or school, to work, then back to child care, and finally return home at the end of a long day. Life is hectic. Many find it easier to turn on the television or computer than to organize some outdoor experiences for their kids.

What are your children missing? It's free time just to be kids. They need time to run and play, time to explore and appreciate nature, time to think about things, and time to be nurtured by the outdoors. While playing outdoors children experience the change of seasons. They get exercise and benefit from sunshine and fresh air. They develop physical skills and learn to enjoy things found in nature. If children are dressed appropriately, it is safe for them to play outdoors except when the weather is extreme.

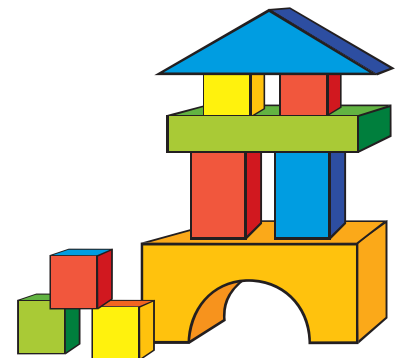
Your children will not know about all the good things to be enjoyed and treasured outdoors unless they are given chances to experience them during childhood. Give your child a special gift – lots of chances to go out and play!

How Does Your Child Feel About Child Care?

In her *Exchange* magazine article, *Looking at the Quality of Early Childhood Programs*, child development specialist and author Lilian Katz suggests asking your child to find out how good the child care is. Find out what your child thinks. See if the child care is right for him.

Here are some things to check on:

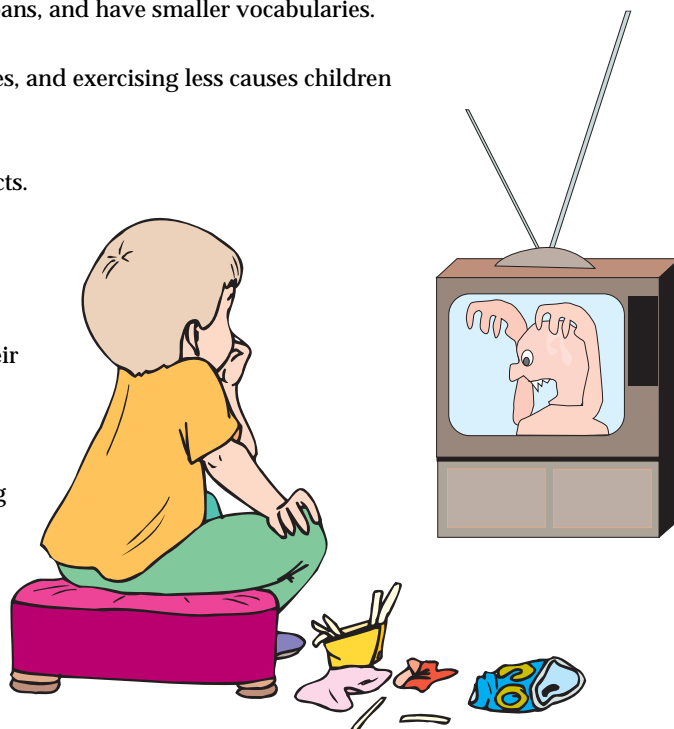
- Does your child feel welcome there?
- Does she feel part of the group?
- Do the caregivers make your child feel comfortable there?
Do they explain how to do things?
- Are the children's opinions valued?
- Does your child interact well with the other children?
- Are the activities interesting? Do they involve your child doing things rather than just being entertained? Are activities meaningful?
- Does your child enjoy being at child care? Is he eager to go each day?



What is Your Child Learning From TV?

Here is some “food for thought” for parents. Does your child watch a lot of television and movies or play a lot of video games? Here are some ways children are affected by this:

- Children who spend a lot of their time watching TV or playing video games do not do as well in school. They spend less time reading, have shorter attention spans, and have smaller vocabularies.
- Spending a lot of time watching television, playing video games, and exercising less causes children to be more overweight because they tend to eat more snacks.
- Television ads often promote unhealthy food and snack products.
- Children copy behaviors they see on TV and in video games. These can be negative, even violent behaviors.
- Children who watch a lot of television are not as creative in their play.
- Ads can be harmful. Young children cannot tell the difference between an ad and a show. Ads often encourage children to nag their parents to buy a product.



Promote Healthy Eating Habits

Make sure to provide healthy snacks for your child. Have foods such as fruit, cheese, crackers, and vegetables handy for snacks. Resist junk food advertised on TV. Insist on meal times being special family times by turning off the television and eating together.

For more information go to the Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment (TRUCE)
Web site at www.truceteachers.org

More from Better Kid Care

The Better Kid Care Web Site at www.betterkidcare.psu.edu has more information for parents. Look for other *Family Time-Work Time* issues, *Parents Count*, child care and activity tip sheets, snack ideas, choosing child care tips, school readiness information, and the monthly Better Kid Care E-Newsletter. To sign up for the E-Newsletter, send a request to BetterKidCareNews-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu.

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Resources: Nancy Wilson, January 2007, *Go Outside to Play*, Better Kid Care Program, Penn State University; Lilian G. Katz, July 2006, *Looking at the Quality of Early Childhood Programs*, from an article in the *ExchangeEveryDay* e-newsletter; *TV and Your Child*, Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children’s Entertainment (TRUCE), January 2006, West Somerville, MA

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