

NEWS RELEASE

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Kids Who Watch Less TV Demand Fewer Toys

Children who watch less TV want fewer toys, reports a new study published in the June issue of the Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

The study documented the effects of a school-based effort to reduce television, video game and video tape use among third- and fourth-graders upon those children's requests for toy purchases. It found that by the end of the school year, among those students who encouraged to watch less TV, "the odds of a child requesting a toy purchase in the prior week was about 70% lower..."

The study concludes that "reducing television viewing is a promising approach to reducing the influences of advertising on children's behavior."

"If you want your kids to stop nagging you for toys, then put the TV set in the closet or get rid of it altogether," said Gary Ruskin, executive director of Commercial Alert. "The study just confirms what Economics 101 tells us: that advertising works, especially on vulnerable and impressionable children."

"Kids are mimics. What they see on TV is what they want to have and what they want to be," Ruskin said. "Advertisers know this. Programmers know this. It's time for the politicians in our country to wake up to it, and defend children from commercial manipulation."

The study notes that "On average, the number of commercials a child sees has increased from 20,000 per year in the 1970s to about 40,000 commercials per year today."

The lead author of the study is Thomas N. Robinson M.D., M.P.H. of the Stanford University School of Medicine. A PDF version of the study is available at: <http://www.commercialalert.org/television/Toytv.pdf>.

Regarding toddlers, in 1999, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a statement on "Media Education" that "Pediatricians should urge parents to avoid television viewing for children under the age of 2 years."

Ralph Nader founded Commercial Alert in 1998 to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere, and to prevent it from exploiting children and subverting the higher values of family, community, environmental integrity and democracy. For more information, see Commercial Alert's website at <http://www.commercialalert.org>.