

The National Effective Parenting Initiative



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Six Ways to Be a Media Savvy Parent

by Liz Perle, *Common Sense Media*

- 1. Visit an online social networking site.** If you have young kids, check out Club Penguin. See what the fuss is all about. Embrace their enthusiasm, but educate yourself about what goes on. For your older kids, visit Facebook or MySpace. Ask them to show you their pages.
- 2. Play a video game with your kid.** Not one of the really gross ones -- try one of the Guitar Hero Games. Or play a sports game on the Wii. or pass a football with Madden. The best way to keep kids away from violent games is to help them enjoy time with you without having to maim a living soul.
- 3. Download something your kids will like.** Pick a song they've never heard. Then ask them to play something for you that you've never heard. Put in your two cents afterward.
- 4. Check out YouTube.** Your kids have -- probably when they were looking for something funny. So go to the comedy section, find something you like, and surprise them.
- 5. Invest in a digital video recorder (DVR).** All cable systems now have them, and TiVo is always a great option. But whatever method you use, take control of the TV this year. Record what you like, create your own channels (like TiVo's KidZone), fast forward through the ads, and skip the shows that really make you wonder about the fate of humankind.
- 6. Learn how to manage your kids' online lives.** Check site histories, set appropriate age filters, and check out the parental controls on your browser. Teach your kids the basics of safe searching (Google has a safe-search setting), and give them a digital code of conduct. Don't let them figure it all out by themselves.

About Liz Perle

A 20-year publishing veteran, Liz Perle is responsible for the overall editorial leadership of Common Sense Media which is a national organization led by concerned parents and individuals with experience in child advocacy, public policy, education, media and entertainment.

Their website is www.common sense media.org.